

Northwestern UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

FOOTNOTES



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Cover: These artfully arrayed materials from the unprocessed WGN Radio archive hint at the challenge ahead for Libraries staff as they catalog and preserve 70 years' worth of recordings across a diversity of media. Read more on page 8.

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From the dean



Hello, I'm Xuemao. Pronounce it *shee-mo*—and if you know Mandarin Chinese, you might pronounce it slightly differently.

I am proud and privileged to follow in the footsteps of Dean Sarah Pritchard, whom I have long considered a friend and mentor. I have already spoken individually with some of our board members and other donors, but please forgive me if I haven't gotten to you yet.

In addition to being the new dean, I am also a newer American. I came to the United States more than 30 years ago from China to attend graduate school, then decided to stay and pursue my professional career. I became a citizen in 2006. From the beginning of my journey as an American, I've been very grateful for all the opportunities this country and its people have given me.

I come to Northwestern from a long and satisfying library career in public and private academic institutions, including Emory and Johns Hopkins Universities. Most recently, I served at the University of Cincinnati as dean of libraries, university librarian, and vice provost of digital scholarship. I achieved much there that I'm proud of, including establishing an interdisciplinary digital scholarship center, an innovative press and publishing program, and a special unit of research-data management. I also helped build a joint co-op program between the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Chongqing University in China. Those successful and fruitful programs had a great impact on UC's core academic mission, and they are a tangible demonstration of the new and transforming role of libraries.

So why did I choose to upend my life again and come to Northwestern?

It's because I am always striving for my greatest potential. Every time I have changed jobs and moved to a new library, it has been my aim to make a bigger impact. And if you're looking for a place to make a big impact, Northwestern is the right place to be. As a top 10 university with renowned collections, engaging services, talented staff, and an impressive learning and research community to serve, Northwestern is too extraordinary to ignore when the opportunity arises.

And on a personal level, being close to our son's family in Chicago and having a regular opportunity to see our baby granddaughter is a wonderful gift for our family.

Now the real work begins. My first task is to address the recent recommendations from the University's once-a-decade program review and then create a long-term vision of how the Libraries will engage and serve the Northwestern community in closer alignment with the University's strategic direction. You'll read more about that progress in the spring, but for now, I have a lot of listening to do. And more of you to meet!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Xuemao Wang', written in a cursive style.

Xuemao Wang
Dean of Libraries
Charles Deering McCormick University Librarian

First archivist for the Black experience mends fences, one history at a time

“A path to a loving relationship”

MaryAnn Marsh '85 knows the hard history of Northwestern University's attempts—and, from some perspectives, its insufficient attempts—to make its Black students feel like a welcome part of the purple family. That's why she also knows the importance of Charla Wilson.

Wilson joined the Libraries in 2017 as the inaugural archivist for the Black experience, tasked with capturing histories missing from Northwestern's archives. Marsh, president of the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association (NUBAA), credits Wilson with steadily winning back the hearts of disconnected and disaffected Black alumni.

In the years before Wilson's arrival, Marsh would make phone calls to potential donors and would often be met with words that were painful to hear: “Northwestern doesn't care about us; why would I care about them?”

After Wilson arrived, however, and began the difficult work of building trust with generations of Black alumni, the tenor of these “hard relationships” changed, Marsh said. With each alumni interaction, Wilson has shown that the University is committed to chipping away at “the feeling that Northwestern doesn't truly value the Black experience or commit to it.

“I think this position creates a path to a loving relationship like

nothing else we've ever done,” Marsh said on the five-year anniversary of Wilson's hiring.

Temporary role becomes permanent

Wilson had to hit the ground at a sprint when she arrived. The 50-year commemoration of the 1968 Bursar's Office takeover was coming up, and after that—based on the original parameters of her temporary position—she had only three years to make an impact.

Given that it has been more than five years since her arrival, is it safe to say that she succeeded?

“I'd like to think so,” Wilson said modestly.

Former dean of libraries Sarah Pritchard agreed more vociferously. She advocated for making the three-year position a permanent one, winning approval for that change in 2018.

“It was clear from the start that there was an ongoing need for this role and that a temporary position wouldn't be enough,” Pritchard said. “Of course, Charla was doing a great job from the very start, which made it very easy to argue that, yes, we should make this role permanent.”

Even if Wilson herself speaks quietly about her impact, her record speaks much more loudly. For the commemoration of the takeover—the Black student protest that brought the civil rights era fully into focus on

campus—she worked with the administration and NUBAA to arrange for lectures by participants, contribute to a documentary video, conduct interviews, and curate an exhibition of archival material. Her work has resulted in several accomplishments:

- a 50th-anniversary commemoration of the Northwestern Community Ensemble's founding, featuring a digital exhibit, another documentary, a commemorative book, and oral history interviews
- a role in the multiyear Black House renovation project as a member of its Curating the Space Committee
- the development of a self-guided audio tour of the Evanston campus highlighting the histories of Black students, as well as a partnership to create other historical and social justice tours of campus
- a “redescription” project to rewrite the outdated and harmful language in the Libraries' finding aids for several collections relating to enslaved people, including Frederick Douglass
- oversight of a student-curated exhibition of Douglass-related materials, *Freedom for Everyone: Slavery and Abolition in 19th-Century America*
- presentations to the Northwestern community and local organizations, including “A Century of Student Life at Northwestern University,” “AfAm at 50: Extending Our Reach” (for the Department of African American



Charla Wilson in her Deering Library office

Studies), and a Black history lecture series with the Evanston NAACP

- ongoing work to increase student groups' awareness of and trust in University Archives, encouraging them to deposit materials

The University has noticed.

Earlier this year, Wilson received the 2022 Daniel I. Linzer Award for Faculty Excellence in Diversity and Equity, an annual prize given by the Office of the Provost that recognizes faculty who “work collectively to build a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable climate on campus.” The recognition comes with a \$5,000 award.

Oral histories fill the gaps

When Wilson was interviewing for the role, she could tell that tensions surrounding the upcoming takeover commemoration were high throughout the University community. With so much attention fixed on her, she told herself not to get caught up in those pressures.

“I knew I had to focus, adopt a middle ground, be professional and respectful, and get my job done,” she said. “I focused on what I love, and that is history, archival research, and curation. And I had fun.”

The original vision was to make sure the experiences of Black students were being preserved archivally, but the *how* of that directive was up to her, Wilson said. So she has shaped her role to include education of the University community, outreach to alumni and student groups, speaking engagements, and an emphasis on capturing oral histories from Black alumni.

Wilson has spoken often about “listening for silences in the archive”—a deliberate effort to seek out gaps in the record. Her work at Northwestern

“Northwestern has been forward-thinking, opening itself up to a deeper dive in understanding this history. That can expose difficult histories, which may be why we don’t see more positions like this.”

has shown her that oral history is an excellent tool for finding and eradicating those silences.

“Incorporating oral history into my work gets those stories that may not show up in the physical collections,” she said.

This was proved most powerfully to her in her “most cherished moment”: bringing Kathryn Ogletree ’71, G ’76 to campus for a lecture during the takeover commemoration. The substantial number of primary source materials in the archives told a story that didn’t include Ogletree’s name.

“As I reached out to alumni, I started hearing about Ogletree as their leader, which threw me off.

I wasn’t getting that from the documents,” Wilson said. “It’s obvious, looking back; she was president of For Members Only [the Black student alliance]. But it wasn’t until I conducted those interviews that it became clear she was a planner of the protest.”

The perspective of those primary source materials was predominantly that of the University administration. By seeking out participants to join the storytelling, the archivist discovered the “eye-opening” disconnect that had erased Ogletree’s contribution—and that has informed Wilson’s approach ever since.

“She’s the person who I keep in mind in my approach to collection

development and curation,” Wilson said. “I always ask the Kathryn Ogletree question. Is anyone missing here? We have to think critically to find those potential blind spots.”

To date, Wilson has found no other major university with a similar role dedicated to preserving the histories of underrepresented students. When asked if she feels like a pioneer, she said, “No, I feel blessed. Northwestern has been forward-thinking, opening itself up to a deeper dive in understanding this history. That can expose difficult histories, which may be why we don’t see more positions like this.” ■

Campaign will endow Black-experience archivist position

These days, Will Evans ’77 is a vocal supporter of Northwestern, but he knows firsthand that not all Black alumni feel a sense of belonging with their alma mater.

The immediate past president of the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association now sees a way to win over more alumni who have been skeptical of Northwestern’s commitment to Black students: by leading a campaign to endow the position of archivist for the Black experience.

Recent commemorations of events like the 1968 Bursar’s Office takeover and the 1971 founding of the Northwestern Community Ensemble resulted in robust storytelling and the capturing of yet untold histories, which “could not have happened without Charla Wilson,” he said. He watched as people opened up to her, and now “Charla can call people that no one else at the University can call.

“You can turn people around with work like this—people who would never want to come back to this University. You make this kind of effort, now you’ve got them by the heart.”

By endowing the archivist role like other important campus roles, Northwestern shows its commitment to high-priority fields of study, said Jennifer Mullman, director of development for the Libraries. An endowed position also ensures that the role attracts and retains the most qualified archivists, even generations after Wilson leaves the role. About 500 of the 3,300 faculty positions at Northwestern are endowed.

Evans established the Fund for the Archivist for the Black Experience to support Wilson’s work. Now development is under way to establish another fund for the \$1.5 million required to endow the position.

“This is the biggest impact I want to make at the University,” Evans said. “This archivist can have such a long-lasting impact on Black life at Northwestern. There are pioneers out there who made a difference, and I don’t want that history lost.”

To learn more about the campaign, contact Jennifer Mullman at 847-467-7278 or jmullman@northwestern.edu.

University Archives as “reincarnation machine”

Emmy-winning TV writer takes charge of her legacy



During Cindy Chupack’s 2020 induction into the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications’ Hall of Achievement, Dean Charles Whitaker lauded the writer and producer on the announcement that she had agreed to deposit her professional papers at University Archives.

Chupack ’87 quipped in response, “When I heard [Northwestern wanted my papers], I was like, ‘Does that mean I’m dying soon?’”

University archivist Kevin Leonard said Chupack’s reaction isn’t exactly illogical. When he approaches accomplished alumni about depositing their papers in Archives, they often brush it off as a task for retirement—or later.

“Typically, it is much easier for us to acquire such collections once the prospective donors have considered major life events such as retirement, downsizing, and, sadly, the prospect of what awaits us all,” he said.

Putting it off has obvious consequences, possibly

leaving a grieving family to deal with the personal effects of a loved one’s life. It almost certainly ensures the donor loses a say in the final expression of that life’s legacy.

Then there’s the challenge of archiving donors’ lives at the peak of their professional careers.

“These people are busy and often need immediate access to their records,” Leonard said.

But it isn’t always that way. Chupack, a 2022 recipient of the Northwestern Alumni Medal, is a writer and producer whose credits include *Sex and the City*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, and *Modern Family*. She agreed to Leonard’s request to begin depositing material from her career, even as she continues creating apace. (Her Netflix film *Otherhood*

debuted in 2019, and her series *Fleishman Is in Trouble* debuted on Hulu in November.)

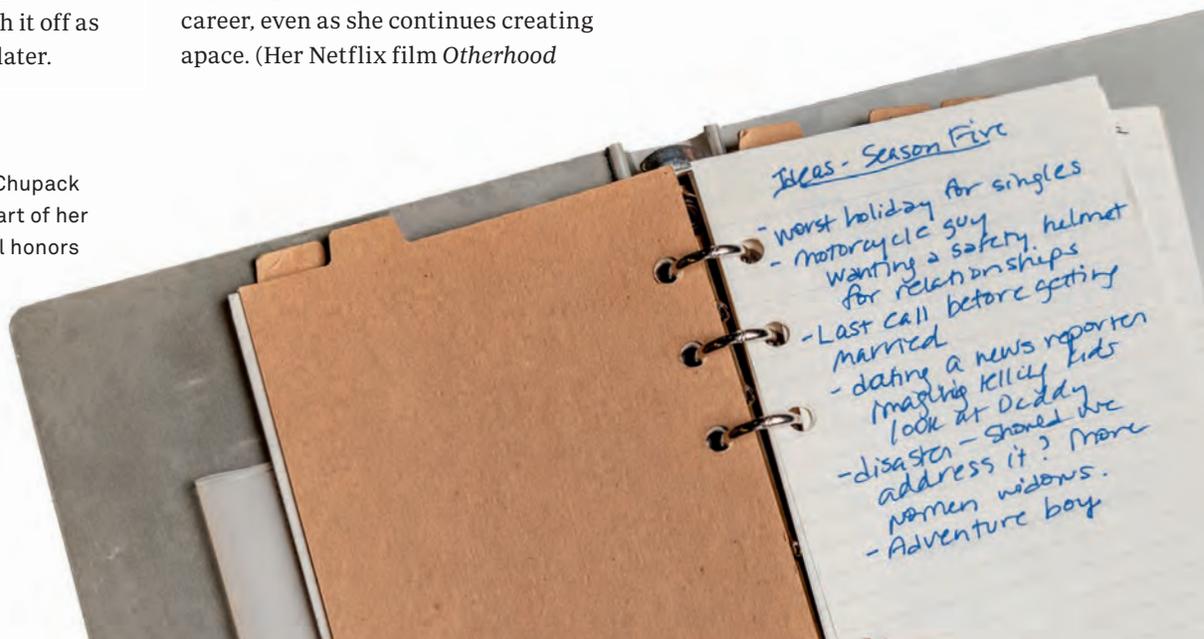
Once she recovered from getting Leonard’s unexpected request, Chupack saw the advantage of working with Archives now to shape and preserve her legacy. Across a writing and producing career that has earned her three Golden Globes and two Emmys, Chupack had saved reams of material that informed her many columns, books, and screenplays, from journals to boyfriends’ letters.

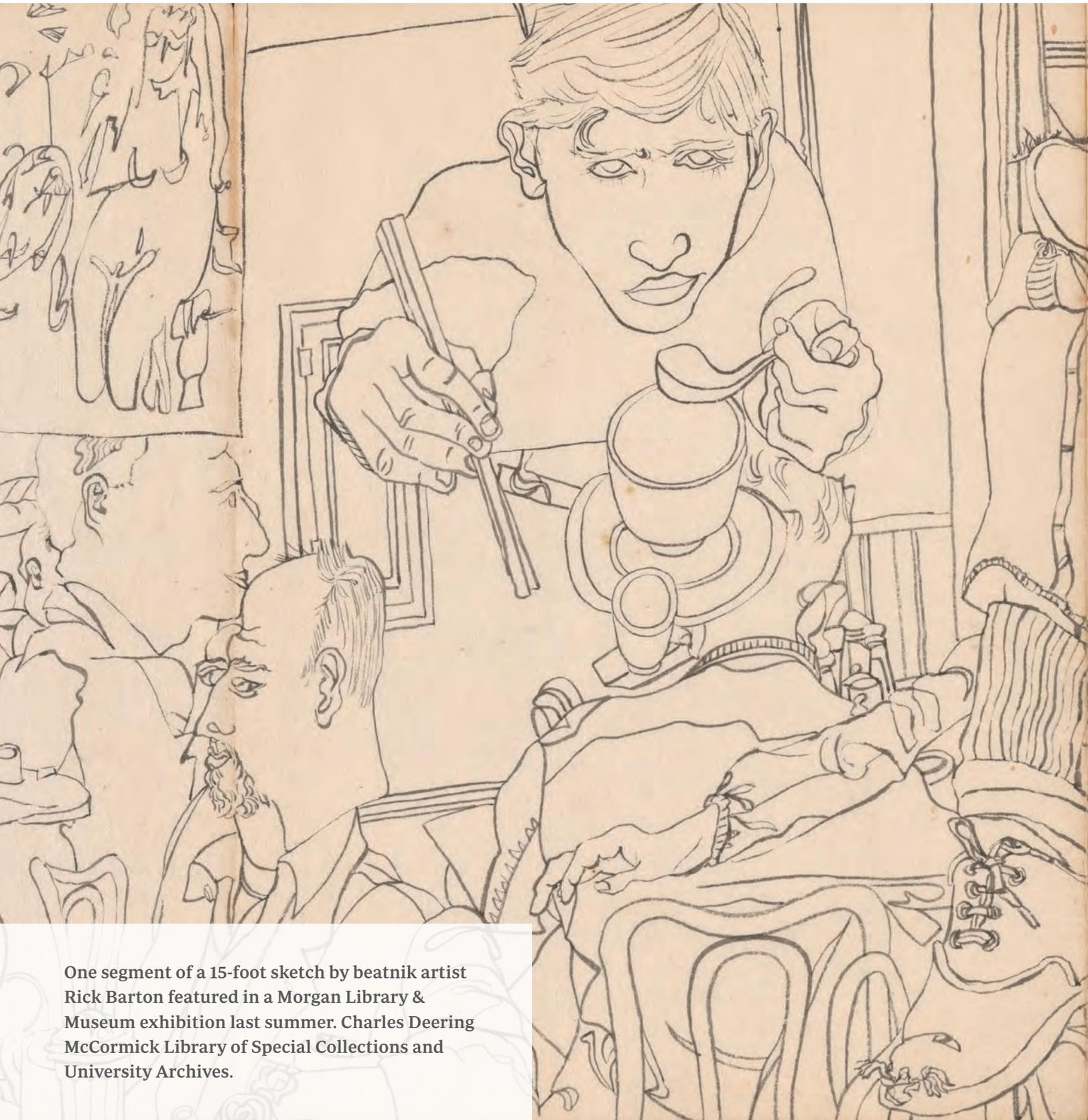
“So much of what a writer does will never be seen,” she said. Because her archive contains unpublished musings, early script drafts, and even a rejected Hershey’s Kisses campaign from her first career in advertising, the full story of her creative process will live on.

That sort of legacy preservation is what Leonard hopes other alumni will consider when they get his call.

“Archives permit the transmission of thoughts across time,” Leonard said. “We allow voices to be heard and personalities to be known long after the transits that we are allotted by our mortality. We might be the closest thing to a reincarnation machine that humans so far have devised.” ■

Above: Screenwriter Cindy Chupack participates in a panel as part of her Northwestern Alumni Medal honors during Homecoming 2022. Right: Chupack’s papers, including this *Sex and the City* notebook, capture her creative process.





One segment of a 15-foot sketch by beatnik artist Rick Barton featured in a Morgan Library & Museum exhibition last summer. Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.





Dialing in to local broadcast history

Seventy years of WGN Radio audio to be archived at Libraries

It's quiet in the secured stacks of the Libraries, but with a glance at the aisles and aisles of Chicago's WGN Radio audio stored there, it's easy to imagine the cacophony of sound hidden within. The 15,000-item archive, recently received by the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives, is chockablock with 70 years' worth of recordings that encapsulate a swath of history as told by the famed journalists, sports-casters, interviewers, and prank-pulling drive-time hosts of Chicago's influential talk radio giant.

The archive fills cardboard boxes of every size, representing every format possible. Pulling out any one box hints at the enormous scope of the contents—and at the cataloging challenge ahead for Northwestern librarians.

In one aisle, slim vertical boxes of reel-to-reel tapes stand in meticulous uniformity. These are among the crown jewels of the archive: a comprehensive set of recordings from the three-decade tenure of celebrity interviewer Roy Leonard. The spines bear handwritten titles that read like a stroll down the Hollywood Walk of Fame: Milton Berle, Dudley Moore, Tom Hanks, Liza Minnelli, Christopher Reeve—and that's only one shelf containing tapes from the late 1980s.

One aisle over, there lies a more chaotic array: a box decorated in holiday wrapping paper and filled with

recordings like “Spike O’Dell’s Christmas Experiment” and “Turn Your Knob to Bob’s Xmas Special”; near that, a box of *carts* (the continuous-loop tape cartridges that DJs use for instant sound effects) with a smattering of more curious relics: “Temple City Kazoo Orchestra/Also Sprach Kazoostra/1:15” and “You Dun Stomped My Heart/:10.”

These treasures are just one component of the station's audio archives, a gift from WGN's owner, the Nexstar Corporation. The archive spans 1941 to 2011 and primarily comprises tapes, but there are also grooved discs, CDs, and minidisks. The litany of local hosts represented in the archive includes Chicago radio legends such as morning talk host Wally Phillips; his successor, Bob “Uncle Bobby” Collins; Milt Rosenberg, the 40-year host of current events program *Extension 720*; and Kathy O’Malley and Judy Markey, whose riotous midday talk show provided an early showcase for women’s voices in talk radio.

For 100 years, WGN Radio and its hosts have served up a popular mix of news, talk, sports, and cultural programming. In fact, its influence goes well beyond the city: Broadcasting at 50,000 watts from a 750-foot tower in Schaumburg, Illinois, the station reaches listeners across central and eastern America. That’s why interview shows like Roy Leonard’s attracted such a who’s who of actors, musicians, and other cultural influencers.



“If people wanted 50,000 watts to blast their ideas from the Rockies to Appalachia, they came to WGN,” said University archivist Kevin Leonard (no relation to Roy).

It’s not just the celebrity interviews that make this collection so remarkable, according to Neil Verma, assistant professor of sound studies in the Department of Radio/Television/Film. The very fact that WGN Radio’s hosts spent days and nights talking about current events means that this archive is a special kind of record of American culture.

“Local history matters,” Verma said. “One of the ways you can know local history in a palpable and meaningful way is by listening to radio broadcasts. They are a kind of real-time experience of living in a place, which you can’t get from a newspaper or a book or any other kind of tangible archive.”

Verma, who works with the Library of Congress’s Radio Preservation Task Force, said that listening to an entire day of local broadcasting can give a sense of a place, the people who lived there, and what mattered to them. Because of the influence of WGN Radio over the past century, this archive is particularly suited to that kind of introspection, he said.

“If we didn’t have local archives like this one, that view would vanish,” he said. “All we would have is the stories told by big national broadcasters and newspapers.”

Before that local history can be plumbed, however, the Libraries have a lot of work to do, said Scott Krafft, curator of special collections. Thousands of hours of audio will need to be cataloged and, when necessary, digitally preserved before they can be made publicly available.

And then there’s the question of stability. Preserving an audio archive, to say nothing of just listening to it, poses a particular challenge to those tasked with the assignment.

“These rare and unique recordings are spread among many formats, some of them fragile or unstable, so it will require a lot of work to make them available to researchers,” Krafft said.

For example, magnetic media like audiotape are notoriously unstable. Tapes relay information by storing patterns of magnetic particles on an acetate or polyester base; over time such materials can break down, even in the climate-controlled environments libraries provide. In addition, the archive contains delicate media like glass transcription discs, a radio recording medium common during World War II. The lacquer coating on such discs can separate from the glass over time, destroying the recording. Couple these issues with the obsolescence and precarity of aging playback equipment, and even listening to analog audio can be a challenge, Krafft said.

“Ideally, older media would be played just once—during their digitization,” Krafft said. “Navigating the preservation of this archive will take time.”

But the effort, even if it means a long wait, will be worth it, Verma said.

“Without archives like this, we’d never have a sense of the texture of the lives of people who lived here,” he said. “For as important an institution as WGN, which has been at the center of Chicago life for a hundred years, they’re really meaningful.” ■



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Northwestern University Libraries appreciate the generosity of our donors. This report reflects giving from September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022, the University's fiscal year.

Please send any corrections to Jennifer Mullman, Director of Development for Libraries, Press, and University Archives, Northwestern University, 1201 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois 60208-4410; 847-467-7278; jmullman@northwestern.edu.

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Rare Blake print acquired

An extraordinarily rare lithograph by the English artist and poet William Blake (1757–1827) is now part of the growing collection of Blake originals in the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.

Created in 1806 or 1807, the print depicts the biblical figure Enoch—described in early Jewish legend as the inventor of writing—with surrounding allegorical figures engaging in various creative arts. Only five known copies of the work exist; this one was discovered recently in England within a collector’s scrapbook.

“Our small Blake collection is becoming significant in a modest but real way,” said Scott Krafft, curator of special collections. “With Enoch we not only enrich the pedagogical opportunities for our Northwestern community but become a place on the map for the larger world of Blake studies.”



FOOTNOTES

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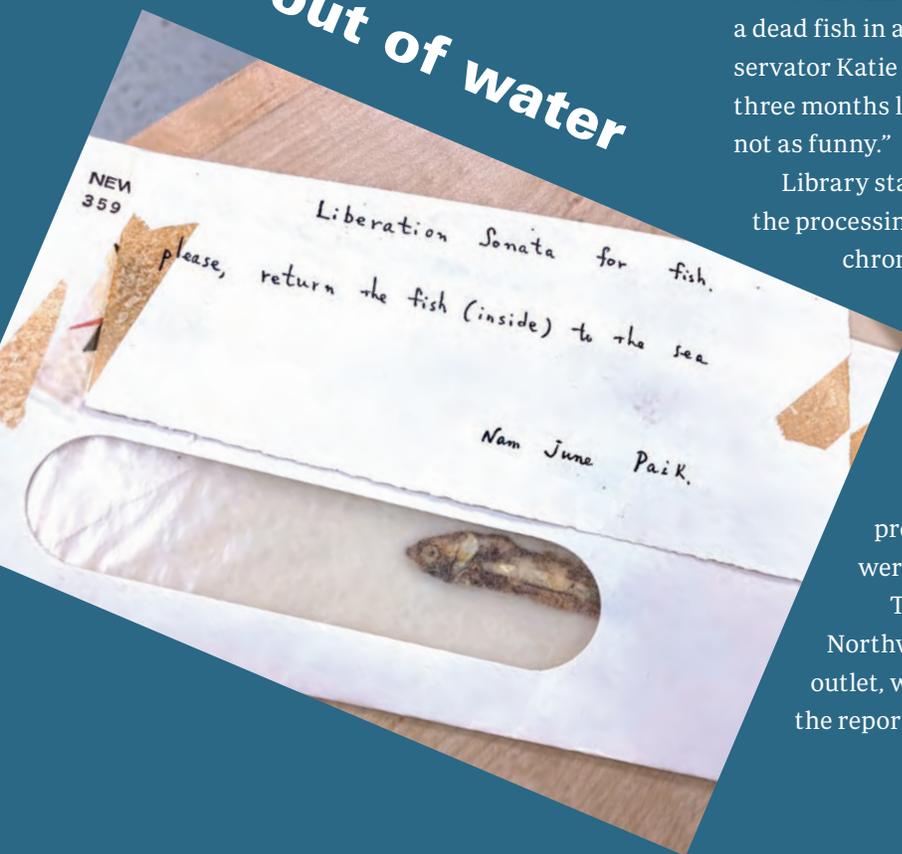
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A fish out of water



It began with an offhand tweet and an amusing photo of a dead fish.

“Sometimes an archivist drops by the conservation lab with a dead fish in an envelope and we all gasp and titter,” wrote conservator Katie Risseeuw on a Libraries Twitter account. “Then three months later, said archivist comes with 17 more and it’s not as funny.”

Library staff made the unusual discovery recently during the processing of the Charlotte Moorman Archive, which chronicles the life of the avant-garde musician and

performance artist. The fish, seemingly a dried anchovy, was found in an envelope from artist and frequent Moorman collaborator Nam June Paik. It was labeled “Liberation Sonata for fish: Please return the fish (inside) to the sea.”

A single fish was sealed in polypropylene to preserve the appearance of the work, and the rest were stored separately in a single container.

The enigmatic tweet caught the interest of the Northwestern News Network, the student-run broadcast outlet, which dispatched a reporter to learn more. To see the report, visit libraries.nu/FishSonata.