I’m just back from MLA in NYC, where I barely had a chance to talk to any of you because I was more than slightly overextended at that meeting. This too shall pass, and I must confess that part of me is looking forward to passing the plastic hammer—which I carried all the way to New York and then forgot to use to bring our interim meeting to order—to Vice Chair/Chair-Elect Sarah Dorsey in Greenville, SC in November. I long for the days where I sat and watched other SEMLA Chairs (namely: Dale Hudson, Robena Eng Cornwell, Nancy Zavac, Bill Coscarelli, Robert Curtis, Roberta Chodacki Ford, and Lois Kuyper-Rushing) bring business meetings to order while I just quietly conversed with other SEMLA members and got to know you better in my role as just another cataloger in the organization. But as I long for those days, I consider what it is that makes SEMLA a strong, functioning organization and one of my absolute favorite professional library associations. It’s easy to say, “It’s the people.” Well DUH-H-H, as the kids would say. But what is it about the interactions among such diverse people that gives it the spark that makes it SEMLA?

It may not be something that would commend us to a Fortune 500 company, but for one thing, we’re very, very funny. SEMLA has one of the most finely honed and easily triggered funny bones of any group I’ve ever been with. We laugh together a lot, and that helps us get things done. It’s been my experience that people who laugh together as much as we do are quicker to forgive one another when we do have occasion to get on one another’s nerves, whether through conflict over organizational policy or simple personality clashes—for the most part, we don’t dwell on the negative, even after we’ve just had a round of “I could just slap so-and-so upside the head when s/he gets like that!” with another SEMLA member.

So again: what are the sources of this peculiar esprit de corps? Our personalities are as diverse as can be, just like the organizations and collections in which we work or the user groups we serve. What’s the common thread? I’m reminded of some of the ideas posited by my compatriot Glenn Gould in his 1967 radio documentary The Idea of North, which theories I might well re-name for present speculation’s sake as The Idea of

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SEMLA

Chapter Officers

Chair, Neil Hughes
University of Georgia

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University of North Carolina-Greensboro

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Margaret Kaus
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Middle Tennessee State University

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Tulane University

Newsletter Editor, Jennifer Ottervik
University of South Carolina

Assistant Editor, Alan Ringwood
University of South Carolina

Member News

The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary recently paid tribute to Dr. Harry Eskew, who has been Music Librarian and Professor of Music History and Hymnology at the Seminary for over 35 years. A banquet honoring Dr. Eskew was held January 25 at New Orleans’ First Baptist Church. Dr. Eskew also was presented with a new hymn that was written in his honor. Many testimonials were offered by friends, colleagues, and current and former students of Dr. Eskew, who spoke of his intelligence, compassion, and dedication. Dr. Eskew will be retiring from his positions at the Seminary on July 31, 2001.

David Hursh was promoted to Head Music Librarian at East Carolina University on January 1, 2001. David was also selected by MLA to receive the 2001 Walter Gerboth Award, which he will use to support his current research project, “Academic Music Library Reference Desks: Traditions and Trends.”

Shelly Moore has accepted the position of Head Music Librarian at the Mannes College of Music in New York City. Shelly will begin her position immediately following her graduation from the University of South Carolina this May.

New Members

Hayley Odell will graduate from Furman University with a degree in church music this spring. Ms. Odell currently works as a student manager at the Maxwell Music Library. She will be getting married in July of this year, and plans to continue working in the Clemson area.

Bruce Whisler is an instructor at Furman University, where his wife Laurel is the music librarian. At Furman Bruce teaches introductory music courses and trumpet. Before coming to Furman, Bruce was on the faculties of Hanover College and Ball State University, where he is a doctoral candidate. Bruce especially enjoys the regional music aspects of the SEMLA conferences, and has gathered much useful information for his classes from these presentations.
Intitutional Members

Davidson College  
Presser Music Library  
P.O. Box 358  
Davidson, NC 28036

Fine Arts Library—Music  
1ADM2164  
University of Kentucky  
500 S. Limestone  
Lexington, KY 40506-0003

Merrick University  
Main Library  
1300 Edgewood Ave.  
Macon, GA 31207-0001

Shenandoah University  
Smith Library  
Winchester, VA 22601

SUNY-Buffalo  
CTS—Serials Department  
Lockwood Library Bld  
Buffalo, NY 14260

University of Mobile  
J.L. Bedsole Library  
University of Mobile  
Mobile, AL 36663-0220

SEM LA at Furman  
November 1-3, 2001

- In Greenville, South Carolina, accessible via I-26 to Highway 25, I-85, and through the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport (shuttle provided by SEMLA).
- Meeting facilities are in the Music Building. Opening reception held in the Robert J. Maxwell, Jr., Music Media Center, which includes the music library, a 24-station computer lab, and a seminar room. Sessions held in Harper Hall, a multimedia classroom adjacent to the music library. Equipment includes PC computer, internet connection, video projector, document presenter/overhead projector, stereo, and VHS. These facilities are in Herring Pavilion, a three-year-old addition to the music building, funding for which was raised by the Furman Singers Alumni.
- Banquet at The Peddler Steakhouse near campus. Building is an old stone farmhouse—great atmosphere, even better food. Entrees range from $14 - $23 and include chicken, pork, steak, or seafood. Meal includes salad bar/fruit cup, choice of baked potato or sweet potato, and entrée. Vegetarian meal will include salad bar (lots of toppings), fruit cup, and choice of potato. Appetizers, desserts, and alcoholic beverages are also available. Unlike in recent years, individuals will pay at the restaurant on separate checks. It should be possible to have a fine meal with appetizer and/or dessert for approximately $25. Registration form will have a place to indicate whether you plan to attend the banquet.
- Hotel is Sleep Inn in Travelers Rest (864-834-7040—ask for the “SEM LA rooms with Furman University”), approx. 5 minutes’ drive from campus, 10 minutes from the banquet site. 29 double rooms and 9 single rooms are reserved until October 1. The block is reserved for November 1-3, Thursday night through Sunday checkout. Continental breakfast is included with the room. Rates are $65 single and $69 double. Use your credit card to confirm the reserveration. From the Chair . . .

South. Part of his thesis was that the cooperativeness that distinguished the opening of the Canadian frontier from the competitiveness of its American counterpart is a characteristic shared by all peoples whose communities and social centers are separated by great distances and a deadly climate. Others, picking up on that thread, later stated that Canada’s national character shares more with Scandinavia than with the United States because of the distance/climate factors, together with Canada’s unique immigration patterns—and that’s true on the face of it. But the whole theory is flawed in that it doesn’t apply only to chilly northern nation-states, and may be applied almost in toto to other world regions (or to institutions or professions within those regions) that are in no sense northerly.

Music librarians in the Southeast are linked by this analogous Idea of South. The new South’s economic growth of the past thirty years, our relative newness to emphasizing higher education in the legislatures, the youthfulness of many of our music collections (academic, public and special), our struggles with racial/cultural diversity in all its forms, and geographic sprawl have made all of us who live and work here acutely aware of the need for cooperation. The Idea of North that in the early days, an inability to cooperate with one’s neighbors on the Canadian frontier could mean death in winters that cause the ground to freeze solid to a depth of fifteen inches until late May. Here in the music libraries of the modern South, the stakes fortunately aren’t quite that high, but there is a recognition that by banding together as a chapter of MLA we have a slightly higher profile among our sources of support than we do as individuals and that this higher profile is—maybe!—more important for us to point to than it may be for music librarians in other parts of the country.

Money is often harder to come by here, and because of that, staff with the necessary specialized training is often harder to justify. And for better or for worse, it’s our historical legacy that our librarians are more inclined to listen when we point to an institution within our own region and say, “But they do it that way in Alabama (or Georgia, or Arkansas, or Tennessee)” than they are if we try to make a claim based on something done in Idaho or Ohio or Vermont, no matter how logical, timely, cost-effective or otherwise desirable what they’re doin’ up nawth might be.

Or not . . . I realize I’m stretching more than a bit here. But I can offer some personal testimony: I do feel more need to reach out to, to consult with, and to socialize with fellow music librarians and music library staff in my position in Georgia than I did when I worked at The Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. There, a local phone call would put me in touch with music librarians at Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, Villanova, the Academy of Vocal Arts, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and so on. An inexpensive long-distance call would put me through to Rowan University in New Jersey or the University of Delaware. Here in Athens, GA, the nearest music collections are in Rome or Atlanta, each an hour and a half’s drive or a think-first long-distance call away. I feel vulnerable, though not overly so. My relationship to Joyce Clinkscale’s over at Emory or Roberta Ford at Columbus State is much more that of a dependent neighbor on a farm “a good pace up the road” than it is of a neighbor in the loft apartment across the hall. (And Joyce and Roberta should be very grateful for that, because I’m not a pretty sight when I discover I’ve run out of dark-roast coffee beans at 7:00 a.m.)

OK, now I’m causing some of you to bristle because I’m contributing to stereotypes of Southerners as primarily still rural and down-home-on-the-farm. Mea culpa. The analogy may be weak, but the reality is strong. Distance makes the need grow stronger. My joy at seeing your faces at our meetings is real and is heightened because I don’t run into you at lunch at Sol’s Famous Metropolitan Diner a couple of times per semester. My subconscious recognizes my need for association with you, and my conscious mind translates that into pleasure, even if I do think you desperately need a new briefcase or I hold your views on metadata to be those of a stegosaurus. So despite what differences I may have with you (and please be assured—I have very few!), my pleasure at seeing you is tangible, and my first response to the sight of you is to laugh.
inside with a laugh of pleasure. “Here is one of mine,” I think, and even my skin acknowledges that pride of belonging by goose-bumping ever so slightly.

I must assume that you share this response to a degree, because of the way I see you interact with me and with each other. Maybe this will all change over time; maybe it won’t. I hope not. As and the next issue of Breve Notes will be full of annual meeting and election materials, I want to thank you now for allowing me the privilege of serving all you funny, warm, talented people as Chair these past two years and for making me feel very much a part of a professional organization that’s good for its members, good for music librarianship, and good for the people whom we serve every day in such a wonderful variety of ways. I haven’t always been successful in this role, but the stalwart, superb group of people who served with me on the SEMLA Board have never let me fall too far, always standing at the ready to pick up after me and lead me back “on task” whenever I falter, so I owe a special thank-you to: Sarah Dorsey, Lynne Jaffe, Margaret Kaus, Anna Neal, Lois Kuyper-Rushing, and Mayo Taylor. (I owe much to others in this organization too, and I hope to be able to recognize each of you by name in my last column in the August issue.)

As is the custom, you’ll have to wait until August for minutes of our interim meeting in NYC, to read in detail about: a) the fun we’ll have at Furman University this coming November 1-3; b) the fun we’ll have next year (2002, that is) at LSU in Baton Rouge; c) the money we’ve raised for the annual Best of Chapters program at MLA, which this year will be ably coordinated by Suzanne Moutlon-Gertig (University of Denver).

On the MLA front, nominations are being sought for Vice President/President-Elect, Recording Secretary, and the next batch of Members-at-Large—contact Chair Leslie Bennett at lbennett@oregon.uoregon.edu or any other member of the committee (they’re on the MLA Website under the “Committees” link!), and make your best case for your intended nominee(s), whether they be fellow SEMLA-ites or others whom you feel would serve music librarianship well.

Oh, yeah . . . check your directory entry in this issue too, please, and post any needed corrections to SEMLA-L. Thanks!

Until August, eh?

Neil “Ookpik” Hughes

Ringwood, Alan R. University of South Carolina (803) 777-2948, fax: (803) 777-6871 artingwo@gwm.sc.edu
Thomas Cooper Library 1322 Greene St. Columbia, SC 29020

Rubin, Marty. The Audio Buff Co., Inc.–Retired (480) 657-7725 (tel. & fax) martyrubin@peoplepc.com 15050 North Thompson Peak Pkwy., #2068 Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Shires, Jill. University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (919) 962-9709, fax: (919) 962-4450 jill_shires@unc.edu

Taylor, Mayo R. Center for Popular Music (615) 898-5512, fax: (615) 898-5829 tayloroms@mtsu.edu 1907 Bartway Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Thompson, Jeannette Cook. Tulane University (504) 865-5696, fax: (504) 865-6773 jeannett@tulane.edu
441 Iberville New Orleans, LA 70119

Tibbits, Edith J. East Carolina University (252) 328-0291, fax: (252) 328-4834 tibhnicz@mail.ecu.edu Jockey Library Greenville, NC 27858

Van Ausdal, Karl. Appalachian State University Retired (219) 936-8235 vanausdalkarl@apstate.edu
574 Pershing Ave. San Antonio, TX 78209

Walden, Carolyn. University of Alabama-Birmingham (205) 934-0633, fax: (205) 975-6230 cwalden@uab.edu
574 Pershing Ave. San Antonio, TX 78209

Walden, Glenn. Louisiana State University (504) 388-2900 notgwgs@lsvun.snc.lsu.edu
LSU Libraries Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Watts, Shirley Marie. Vanderbilt University-Retired (615) 322-7695, fax: (615) 343-0050 watts@library.vanderbilt.edu 1004 St. Andrews Pl. Nashville, TN 37204-4100

Weisbrod, Elizabeth J. Auburn University (334) 444-1723, fax: (334) 444-1753 ewisbrod@lib.auburn.edu
136 N. Ryan St. Auburn, AL 36830

Wells, Paul F. Center for Popular Music (615) 898-2449, fax: (615) 898-5829 prwells@mtsu.edu P.O. Box 41 Middle Tennessee State University Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Whisler, Bruce. Furman University (864) 294-2059 bruce.whisler@furman.edu 152 Keowee Lane Pickens, SC 29671

Whisler, Laurel A. Furman University (864) 294-3797 laurel.whisler@furman.edu 152 Keowee Lane Pickens, SC 29671

Whitson, Jeff. University of South Carolina (803) 777-5424 whitson@jgwm.sc.edu 225 Pond Ridge Rd. East Columbia, SC 29223

Wujick, Dennis S. Memphis Public Library (901) 725-8880, fax: (901) 725-7762 wujick@membpl.lib.tn.us 45 N. Belvedere, #101 Memphis, TN 38104-2517

Yust, Laura N. University of Tennessee-Knoxville (423) 574-7582, fax: (423) 574-9888 lyust@utk.edu 110 Paine Lane Oak Ridge, TN 37830-7511

Zavac, Nancy. University of Miami (305) 284-2429, fax: (305) 284-1041 nzavac@miami.edu 4708 SW 67 Ave., Apt. L-19 Miami, FL 33155

1 “Ookpik” is an Inuktitut word meaning “happy little Arctic owl.” Stuffed Ookpik dolls made of everything from white flannel to real rabbit fur were sold by the tens of thousands to sub-Arctic Canadians in the mid-1960s.