

What Do Folklorists Do?

Folklorists—members of the American Folklore Society—live and work throughout the world. They include students, teachers, scholars, consultants, community organizers, educators, and public agency professionals. Folklorists' interests range from local family traditions to transnational issues of ethnic conflict, from publications to public programming, from the performing to the visual arts, from everyday life to communities' most special occasions, and from research to public policy.

Society members publish scholarly articles, in-depth books, and engaging exhibition catalogues. They produce award-winning documentary films and recordings, as well as nationally recognized radio programs. Our members also develop interpretive programs for all ages: exhibitions, festivals, lectures, and concerts. They organize communities to identify and conserve their folklore and cultural heritage, and they work to establish public policy that honors and respects cultural diversity.

Whatever their particular interests or work, Society members recognize the value of experience-based knowledge and the importance of understanding the intersections of artfulness and everyday life. The artistic, cultural, educational, historical, and political questions our members raise place the field of folklore at the leading edge of contemporary cultural issues, and establish folklore as a primary field of the humanities.

In 1987 the American Folklore Society commissioned folklorist Charles Camp to create a publication on the current and possible future state of the field of folklore. That publication, *Time and Temperature* (1989), included "The Folklorist As...", a series of short essays by folklorists about the challenges and opportunities of their work. We have reprinted those essays here as a way of answering the question "What do folklorists do?".

THE FOLKLORIST AS ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR

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"Being dean is like floating around in a septic tank. You never know when more's coming down and you can never rise above what you're already in." That simile—which during my brief tenure as an academic administrator was recited in some form or other by some administrator or other at every second meeting—is wryly funny to administrators. To their foes, the faculty, such a joke is not merely unamusing. It doesn't even register.

We may place this fact at the heart of the esoteric-exoteric conflict between the two campus camps. From my long experience as a faculty member, I know that a large number of faculty actually believe administrators spend their waking hours plotting ways to oppress (or at least to inconvenience) faculty. From my short experience as an administrator, I know that administrators are far too busy and too oppressed themselves to spend time thinking about faculty. Administrative decisions perceived by faculty as oppressive are often made in the total absence of thought, malicious or otherwise, concerning faculty. If faculty members realized this they would feel even more insulted by administrators than they already do.

It got into academic administration by accident. Several years back I edited my school's self-study for re-accreditation, rewriting everybody else's reports into English, and in the process learned a great deal more about the workings of the whole institution than a faculty member would ordinarily have any reason to know. About that same time, the vice-president for academic affairs vacated his post and there was a sudden need for an acting VP. Because of my familiarity with institution-wide matters, the president asked me to serve for a semester; I accepted, in part, because of curiosity to know what it was that happened to humans when they became administrators. A single semester couldn't put me in too much danger.

For better or for worse, the single semester got stretched out considerably. After finishing the VP stint, I was asked to head the Liberal Studies program and institute some procedures for enhancing student retention while teaching half-time. This I did for two years, until it became clear that trying to teach and do administrative work at the same time is like trying to pat your head and rub your stomach at the same time—the two jobs require differing sets of skills, and if you ever do get coordinated you will have accomplished little except going around in two different kinds of circles. When I returned from sabbatical it was to fulltime teaching.

What skills of the folklorist can be applied in an academic administrative job? One important skill is analytical. I spent a lot of time trying to help faculty and administrators get past the esoteric-exoteric barriers, alluded to above, that were obviously impeding communication. I did not use technical terms in these efforts, but did point out, reasonably, I hope, that, say, the innocent memo from the head of PR that innocently offered a set of deadlines for the printing of next semester's syllabi and workbooks need not be cause for apoplexy on the part of my esteemed colleague on the psychology faculty, who actually believed that said head of PR was personally out to get him. (There is a term I did coin. Knee-jerk facultyism. The administrators I tried it out on loved it. I got away with trying it out on faculty because I was only temporarily an administrator and probably didn't really mean it.)

Similarly, a folklorist in the administration can help administrative colleagues understand the power of an institution's symbology and its effect upon faculty. Several years ago my school was in a bad financial spot—not in any danger of going under, but without resources to provide faculty raises for a couple of years. During this hollow-cheeked period, using money from a separate fund, which it had a perfect legal right to do, the administration purchased some Oriental carpets, large gold-framed pictures, and other furnishings to spruce up the front hallway of the campus's main building in order to impress visitors, parents, and prospective students. From the administration's point of view this was a smart business move. From the faculty's point of view it was pure insult added to the injury of their pocketbooks. In subsequent interactions between the president and the faculty it became clear that the president not only had not

anticipated the effect his move would have upon the faculty, but could not give credence to the emotional content of the faculty's response.

Interactional skill, then, is the other valuable quality a folklorist can bring to academic administration. Knowing how to do field interviews—establishing rapport, listening carefully for tacit cues, all the things that make for a successful field experience—came in handy for me countless times in the administrative office. As in the Oriental-carpet debacle, I learned that administrators and faculty members would get along a lot better if the former used more skill in helping the latter feel good about themselves. That's where a lot of the difficulty lies.

THE FOLKLORIST AS ARCHIVIST

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When I moved to Memphis in 1979 to work as an archivist at the Center for Southern Folklore, my new landlady asked me to fill out a sheet providing vital information about myself. In the space that called for occupation I wrote "archivist."

Scanning the sheet, my landlady reacted with a start and a scoff. "Activist?" she hissed.

I corrected her gently. "Archivist. It's something like a librarian."

"Good," she replied. "We don't need any activists living here."

My landlady's mistake hit closer to the truth than I was willing to admit. As an archivist with training in folklore, I care for collections that reflect the cultural traditions of groups of people historically under-represented in the libraries and archives of our country. I regard myself as an advocate for the people represented in those collections. I guess that makes me an "activist" in the sense that I imagine my landlady used the word—someone whose work plays off the status quo in such a way as to challenge the balance of things.

My landlady's reaction is typical of the surprised responses I get when asked to name my occupation. I always have to elaborate. Once, I've managed to convey a vague sense of what it is I do, people often express envy. I now work in Nashville for the Country Music Foundation. My official title is "Head of Technical Services" for the CNIF Library and Media Center, one of the Foundation's several divisions. The Foundation's mission, as mandated by its Board of Trustees, is to "preserve and illuminate the rich heritage of country music." My job involves making choices about what to collect, how to store it, and what to do with it in order to advance the goals of the organization. I am not an archivist in the strictest definition of the word. A true archivist cares for the non-current records of an organization or institution, preserved because of their continuing value. I care for the retired files of some Nashville record companies, but I also acquire and catalog books, just as a librarian does; and I accept and process donations of original manuscripts, ephemera, photos, and sound recordings, including both commercially issued releases, radio transcriptions, test pressings, and field recordings.

I believe that the niche I occupy is unique. I'm a little bit archivist, a little bit traditional librarian, a little bit manuscripts librarian, a little bit folklorist, and, sometimes, a little bit frustrated that I have to look to a number of different role models for guidance in handling my diverse responsibilities. My training as a folklorist affects and informs my work everyday. To understand how, it is helpful to know a little about the experiences that brought me here in the first place.

My family comes from Mississippi and I lived there until I was thirteen, from 1952 to 1965. Those were difficult years for Mississippi. The struggle to uproot institutionalized racism focused international attention on the state, tainting its image and causing shame and sorrow for many who lived there. In 1965 my family moved to Arlington, Virginia, and I felt ready to deny my southern heritage.

I slowly made peace with that heritage, helped along by the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, which one year focused on Mississippi's cultural traditions, and by a collegiate year abroad in England, which gave me new perspective on the United States and on Mississippi. (The BBC ran a weekly "country" show featuring singers who couldn't sing a lick of real country' and Thomas Hardy's Wessex, as revealed in his novels, bore a tremendous resemblance to my southern home.)

Throughout my undergraduate years I deejayed for the campus radio station at William and Mary. In the quest for original and stimulating programming, I discovered the wonderful bluesmen and string band musicians who came from Mississippi.

When I finished my undergraduate English degree, I decided to study library science and enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1975. There I came into contact with a community of string band enthusiasts that revolved more or less around the Red Clay Ramblers. Many of these musicians had actually taken the time to meet and learn from older traditional musicians from North Carolina and Virginia including Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, and Kyle Creed.

During my final semester of study in library science I took an elective outside the department. Dan Patterson's course on the ballad promised some relief from the rigors of the very technically oriented library science courses. It delivered much more than that—the course was an epiphany. I was surprised to find that I could make a serious study of the musical and cultural traditions of the South, and that I might apply my newly acquired information management skills to the organization and administration of folk cultural collections.

I applied to and was accepted by the University of North Carolina's Curriculum in Folklore. Over the next two years I took folklore courses, worked for a public radio affiliate, cataloged serials in the graduate library, and helped out with various folk festivals in the area. During the summer of 1979 I worked for Bobby Fulcher in the Tennessee State Parks, doing fieldwork and staging interpretive programs for three and a half months. My tenure in Tennessee led to a job in Memphis at the Center for Southern Folklore, where I worked for a year before heading back east to free-lance on a couple of projects—archival in nature—with Carl Fleischhauer at the American Folklife Center. After a year and a half at the Folklife Center, I accepted an offer from Bill Ivey and Charlie Seemann to work at the Country Music Foundation.

So that's how I got here: hillbilly heritage, denial, acceptance, graduate study in library science, graduate study in folklore, some concentrated periods of fieldwork, experience in a couple of archives, a brush or two with national folklore offices, and some good luck.

Now, as Head of Technical Services, I draw on all of those experiences. As I've already suggested, I keep up with the current literature on traditional music, popular music, and the study of culture, since I'm responsible for seeing that our library collection is comprehensive. In doing so, I build on the bibliography that formed the basis of my folklore studies.

I also oversee the acquisition of sound recordings by both current Nashville hitmakers and by artists like Uncle Dave Macon, Earl Johnson's Clodhoppers, or the Dykes Magic City Trio, for instance, who are closer to the musical traditions from which modern country music evolved. I first became familiar with many of these artists, and with the record companies and distributors, which produce or supply their records, during my graduate study and subsequent work experience as a folklorist. I learned about many of them from colleagues who are themselves folklorists.

In the Foundation Library we seek to represent not only the well-known hitmakers and historic figures, but also musicians who are active and popular at the regional and local level. Just as folklorists examine performance that takes place outside the web of business relations that make up the entertainment industry, so do we at the Foundation try to document the many levels at which country music touches people's lives. For every Dolly Parton or Willie Nelson record in our collection, there are dozens by regional favorites like D. L. Menard, Flaco Jimenez, Junior Daughterty, Slim Dusty, or Dave Evans and River Bend.

As important as the sound recordings and studies that treat country music directly are works that examine the contexts-historic, geographic, and cultural-surrounding country music. Once again, my training and work as a folklorist gave me my first exposure to many of these sources, and my job requires that I stay abreast of the current literature.

A large part of my job in recent years has involved research and writing. Frequently this means uncovering information about minor players and overlooked masterpieces. The work is identical to the kind of cultural detective work I did as a fieldworker for the Tennessee Department of Conservation and the Smithsonian. I make phone calls, pay visits, and show interest in the artistic activity of people who usually appreciate knowing that someone cares about their accomplishments and talents.

Weekly, I put in four hours on the CMF's reference desk. My responsibilities include assisting patrons who come in to do research, and answering phone inquiries from all over the nation. My training as a folklorist has taught me that, when fielding questions from a broad range of patrons, curiosity without condescension works best.

At the reference desk and elsewhere I sometimes find myself mediating between the complex business world of country music and the world of community-based artists trying to understand and win acknowledgement from the country music industry. This mediation can mean explaining to an aspiring songwriter the rudiments of song publishing, copyright, or the tightly-knit politics of the recording business; it can mean accepting the treasured photographs, manuscripts,

recordings, and other memorabilia accumulated by artists who have never had any commercial success, whose music occupies a central place in their life histories; or its can mean trying to make the musical traditions that undergird country music meaningful to young hourly wage tour guides who represent the Foundation, and whose musical tastes often run i more to Bon Jovi than to banjos.

Finally, my folklore training comes into play when I represent the Foundation in professional activities outside the organization. I am a member of the Tennessee Folklore Society, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and the Country Music Association. I serve on the Folk Arts panel of the Tennessee Arts Commission. I have helped out with the Tennessee Banjo Institute, the National Folk Festival, the Tennessee River Folk Festival, the Davy Crockett Folk Festival, and the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife. I have moonlighted as a pop music journalist, liner note writer, and talent scout.

The work is fulfilling. I am lucky. I do regard myself as an activist, and my training as a folklorist is a central component of the perspective I bring to the work.

THE FOLKLORIST AS BIBLIOGRAPHER

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American folklorists by and large seem to have only a passing interest in bibliographies, even though they represent an authoritative listing of work accomplished during their careers. Still, there have been good bibliographies produced in the past, e.g., the old special issue of the *Southern Folklore Quarterly* which was later continued as separate volumes produced by Merle E. Simmons, and recently there have been very good specialized bibliographies like those of the Garland Series. The American Folklore Society, however, has never seen fit to document its own research in an annual volume but has relied instead on the efforts of other professional societies here and abroad to assemble the bibliographical record for its scholars.

American folklorists who rely on regularly published compilations for their own research must look specifically to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) annual *International Bibliography, Volume V-Folklore*, and to the biennial *Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographies (IVB)*, published under the auspices of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde (DGV). For the last 10 years I have worked indirectly and directly with these two reference works. As I am now writing, I have just completed a six-year editorship of the *IVB*, Europe's oldest (1917) and most authoritative folklore and ethnology bibliography, a work which I helped convert to computer processing. I am about to become co-section head with Michael Taft of the MLA bibliography. He will be responsible for North American folklore studies, and I will assemble and edit the European contributions. My work with international bibliographies has been exhilarating and extremely rewarding, but it has also been mind-numbingly boring, and most recently there has been a crushing defeat.

My training at universities in the US and in Germany in several languages-German in particular, in literature, linguistics, philology, folklore and *Volkskunde*, all gave me a broad basis from which to work, but it prepared me only somewhat for the editorial work I have been involved in for the last few years. I was not born with a silver citation in my mouth, but I did have rather classical training in bibliography and research methods as a graduate student. What I really needed to know was not part of my education, i.e., computer applications for all of my areas of training in language and culture. This I had to learn on my own, through hands-on contact with my own PC and with a university mainframe. By working closely with the staff of the MLA's Center for Bibliographical Services (CBS), I was drawn rapidly into the world of computers, databases, and into the technological processing of our socio/humanistic studies of humans and their traditions. The appeal of technology was seductive.

When the DGV appointed me primary editor of the *IVB* in 1982, it was for the specific purpose of steering this venerable old European research tool into the computer age and making it available to more scholars by developing subject indexes in three languages, German, English and French. The number of problems to be solved was almost beyond belief, not to mention how overwhelmingly expensive the process of retooling was, but this modernization process was possible by utilizing existing technology and by modifying the MLA computer program for bibliographical work to fit the format of the *IVB*. Some of the immediate problems to be dealt with included sloppy work by field indexers, inconsistent bibliographical style, coding of diacritical markings, special letters, and different alphabets for *all* European languages (e.g., umlaut, virgule, overcircle, cedilla, Icelandic thorn and eth, Cyrillic and Greek alphabets, etc.).

Still more significant problems were the major changes in the discipline, which had taken place since the original system of classification was devised for the traditional *Volkskunde*/folklore canon by Eduard Hoffman-Krayer back in 1917, and an inaccurate and arbitrary indexing system. The thrill of receiving bibliography cards from about 90 indexers all over Europe as well as many from South and North America, was exciting, especially when I was able to see the depth and breadth of work being undertaken by fellow folklorists. I have also been able to follow closely, by means of the entries submitted from a country, just what kind of work has been done, for example, in Albania, in the Scandinavian countries, in Hungary, Estonia, etc. Through numerous meetings in Germany and a few other European countries, and through constant correspondence, I have also gotten to know personally many of the people I was bibliographing. This direct and intense contact actually aided my day-to-day work, since I continued to meet more and more of my contributors personally.

On the negative side, editing nine to ten thousand cards for each volume of the *IVB* became a test of my nerves, my eyesight, and my *Sitzfleisch*. Most challenging of all my tasks was the assigning of index terms to bibliographical entries, which have clever but nondescriptive titles. I had to use all of my language training in German and English to come up with the seven to eight thousand terms needed in each language for each volume, and even though I did not actually produce the French index, my editorial and proofreading work taught me incredible numbers of French vocabulary words in folklore and ethnology. By my own calculations, it took somewhere in the neighborhood of one thousand hours of editorial work every two years to produce a single volume of the *IVB*, and this does not count the actual keyboarding of the entries and the corrections on the printouts.

After the bibliography cards had been edited into the various fields for keyboarding and all of the three language index terms had been added, it was next necessary to proofread twice the 30 or more files of the classified section with 300 items in each file. Then there was the final massive set of printouts of the duplicate file, the type simulation of the classified section, the author index, the three subject indexes in German, English and French. There is no doubt some kind of masochistic gratification in all of this near-obsessive attention to detail, but then there was always the assurance that a beautifully printed volume would soon appear and all of those coded citations would be correctly printed in the original language, including perfect diacritical markings and special letters. Even more meaningful, however, was the knowledge that these data were now on magnetic tape and would become a part of a growing database on the discipline of folklore as it is practiced around the world.

The final stage in the modernization of the *IVB*, storage of the data as a subfile of the MLA database, was underway during the summer of 1988, but unfortunately this will not come about for reasons which are nearly too sad to report. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde decided to break off its working relationship with the MLA and return the editorship of the *IVB* to Germany. The reason given was the high cost of production in the United States, but I am convinced that a ten-year international cooperative effort to attach the *IVB* as a subfile to the MLA database was viewed as an attempt to move the *IVB* from Europe and make an American work out of it. International cooperation has suffered untold damage by this abrupt halt and bibliographical work in the discipline will not easily recover from this enormous setback.

I have thus decided to take my knowledge of European folklore studies, including my knowledge of the most significant scholars, journals, and book publishers in eastern and western Europe, and try to help expand the international scope of the annual MLA bibliography. I have watched the MLA change its own bibliography from a computerized but old-fashioned publication with entries arranged by standardized divisions, principally author and title, into a modern research tool specifically designed for computer storage and retrieval. In 1981 the CBS i converted its database to the new CIFT indexing system (Contextual Indexing and Faceted Taxonomic Access System), which allows scholars to search the entire database contextually, through multiple facets. To date there are about 15,000 folklore items stored and retrievable using CIFT (from 1981 to 1988), plus all of the other files already available for online searches (1968-1980) but which are still organized and stored by the old-fashioned author/title arrangements. These materials are available online through DIALOG Information Services, and have just recently become available on a CD-ROM, through WILSONDISK. By the turn of the century virtually all of the material published in the *MLA International Bibliography*, from 1928 to the present, should be online and on CD. At the moment there is no death knell for published bibliographies, and scholars who like to browse and learn through free associations will still be able to do that with the MLA bibliography and the *IVB*. For those who are increasingly attuned to the thrill and near instantaneous speed of electronic searches, this is no longer some utopian dream; it is already a part of our daily capability. The obvious benefit for all scholars is that we can now spend most of our time reading and writing and less on searching out what our colleagues have already done.

THE FOLKLORIST AS BIOGRAPHER

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I have always been ambivalent about generalities, recognizing that social science has need of them yet distrusting them for their way of taking over, of assuming an ersatz life of their own. Not to look for or recognize patterns in the lives of men and women past and present would be to make ourselves less than human in one direction, but not to keep constantly in mind that generalities are abstractions, mouths with no moisture and no breath, would be to make those lives less than human in another. The individual life-counter, original, spare, strange-has been the basis of all my work in folklore. Whatever ladders I may have climbed, that is where they started.

My early-on interest in folksong led me in two directions. First, there was the hoary problem of origins, of "How got the apples in," as Francis Barton Gummere once asked, and while no folklorist worthy of the name still believed with him in the "singing dancing throng," no-one apparently had seen a songmaker plain either. Basically, the maker was seen as present but unimportant, the tradition, "communal re-creation," being what made the difference. My fieldwork in Maine and the maritime Provinces made me acquainted with the names of many songmakers, notably Larry Gorman, Lawrence Doyle, and Joe Scott, and-using a combination of standard historical sources and materials developed through the technique of oral history-I wrote their biographies, which, if they did not contribute to any new theory of creativity amongst the so-called folk, at least made it clear that the problem there was at least as complex as for creativity on any other social level and should be studied in much the same ways. Whatever alterations the subsequent chain of performers might work, the individual maker was the primary alembic, fusing experience and tradition to form the work of art, familiar yet forever new.

Yet unquestionably that subsequent chain of performers was extremely important and biography could profitably examine its individual links. That is an approach I have used myself only in the most superficial manner, but the relations between one's life, one's repertoire, and one's style are important matters that others had studied (Azadowskii, Henssen, Stekert, and Abrahams, to name only a very few), more than making up for my own deficiency. The line between creator and performer is not necessarily absolute and sharp-sometimes, as Albert Lord has shown us, it may not exist at all-but generally it is as clear in, say, folk music as it is in classical music. Joe Scott and Almeda Riddle are as different as Bach and Heifetz.

My special interest in songmakers led me by the purest serendipity to another application of biography to folklore. I had heard stories about a notorious Maine poacher named George Magoon, and I set out to see what I could find out about the man himself through the same processes I had used with Gorman, Doyle, and Scott. The result was a study comparing the Magoon the community remembered and made into a folk hero with the Magoon I was able to recover from documentary sources, all of which led me to see that, however constituted, history (not to its detriment) is a fiction existing only in and for the present.

All of this work led by both logic and predilection to an even broader application of biography to folklore: the creation of a series of life histories of ordinary people woodsmen, fishermen,

wardens, farmers, nurses—which I have published in our journal (actually it’s more of a monograph series) *Northeast Folklore*. A couple of them came to us as manuscript autobiographies, but most have been developed through tape-recorded interviews by students of mine. Sometimes the authors acted strictly as editors, keeping themselves out of sight except for brief introductions, and sometimes they cast themselves in the role of biographers, using selections from the interviews to illustrate what they had to say. In either case, the raw material was doubly filtered—the authors interviewing in terms of what interested them, the subjects telling their lives as they saw fit—and the end product was always negotiated—nothing going in without the subject’s full approval. Looking as I do upon historical objectivity as something between an *ignis fatuus* and the end of the rainbow, however, I have never seen those matters as insuperable problems.

Finally, I find I am frequently credited with being an oral historian, and I guess that is correct enough, though I fell into oral history almost by accident, being a poor note-taker and still wanting to get people’s exact words. Yet I do not believe there is such a thing as oral history. It is not a genre or *sui generis* a special kind of history. It is no more than a technique for creating documents relating to the past. But it is a technique that has opened great new vistas allowing us to reach out into the great silences and make them more articulate than ever before, forcing us to take account of whole aspects of human experience that, while they have been there all along, can no longer be ignored.

My interest in portraying individual lives has been sustained not only by my faith in their intrinsic value but also by my confidence that generalities like “culture” and “tradition” will shine forth most significantly from the particulars in which they are immanent. In his book *The Open Mind*, J. Robert Oppenheimer claimed that while it was of course useful to subsume particulars under a general order it was “probably no less a great truth that elements of abstractly irreconcilable general orders can be subsumed by a particular,” and he wondered whether that notion might be especially useful in the social sciences. If I am wary of generalities, I should certainly be wary of that one, but I find it not only an interesting thought—and one I can assent to with my experience—but perhaps a corrective to any too great a fealty to the methods of science.

THE FOLKLORIST AS COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

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Several weeks ago, I received a witty little announcement for a proposed paper section at the next meeting of the Society. The section is to deal with such “recently emerged” legendary subjects as the survival of Elvis, the epiphany of Satan on prom night, kidnapping of humans by aliens, and the belief that there are still MIA’s in Southeast Asia and the government is keeping the facts from the American people.

About ten minutes after tearing the announcement into very small pieces I calmed down enough to start thinking about the implications of this kind of (doubtlessly unintentional) insensitivity and lack of contact with reality on the part of folklorists. I thought about Mike, who was fourteen when the nice man from Washington told him that his father's plane had been shot down in Laos, but that we weren't ever going to say that, because of course there weren't any Americans in Laos. I thought about my neighbor, Mafalda, who flew to Hawaii last year to bring home the remains of her son Bobby, missing in action since 1966, only to be given his identification card and told that this was proof of his death. I thought about John, who has stood the vigil at the Wall in Washington for five years for his brother-in-law, missing in action in Korea.

I thought about helping Bruce Jackson proofread the subject headings of the index to *JAF*—a list which included no mention of World War I, World War II, the Korean War, or, until his enlightened editorship, the Vietnam War. I remembered my theory seminar at Indiana, with Richard Dorson railing against those presumptuous pseudo-scholars who thought that folklore might possibly be an applied discipline, while ten thousand miles away General Edward Lansdale, one of the great folksong collectors of our generation, was making brilliant use of folklore in psychological warfare. And I thought about where the discipline of folklore and I have been going for the past twenty years.

In the spring of 1965 I was teaching history for the University of North Carolina extension division at Fort Bragg. My students were members of the Fifth Special Forces and the 82nd Airborne, on their way to their first or second tours in Vietnam, and I thought they were wonderful. I still do. By the fall of 1967 I had finished my course work at Indiana and I was teaching in Buffalo, where I spent the rest of the war writing to my first lot of students in Vietnam while helping some of my second lot cross the Peace Bridge to Canada. Like many Americans, I came to oppose the war; unlike most Americans, I never hated the warriors. But I became busy with other projects and I lost touch with them. Ten years later, at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I found them again.

In the summer of 1981, I studied pilgrimage behavior at the shrine of St. Anne de Beaupré in Quebec. In the winter of 1982, when I showed slides from this fieldwork to my classes, one of my students commented that if I were really interested in pilgrimage I should visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. I went to Washington during my Easter break in 1983 and returned that summer for eight weeks. In the ensuing six years I have made approximately thirty journeys to the Wall.

At Beaupré I had depended almost completely on observation and photography for my research, partly because I felt it would be inappropriate to interview people in a sacred place and partly because my spoken French is minimal, to say the least. At the Memorial, which is also sacred ground, I again began by watching. I gradually began to meet the people: the Park Service Rangers, the tourists, veterans, friends and families who visit. I also came to know what Peter Ehrenhaus has called the guardians of the Wall: the men and women at the POW/MIA vigils, the Park Service Volunteers, and the veterans who return again and again to this "last firebase" of the Vietnam War.

After several weeks I let it be known that I was interested in interviewing people about their experiences at the Wall and gradually they began to come to me. During the next three years I taped interviews with some of the most remarkable people I have ever met, watched the

ceremonies with them on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, walked in their parades and took part in demonstrations with them, helped keep the vigil and acted as a volunteer guide at the Memorial. These interviews and these experiences grew into a book, *The Last Firebase*, published in the spring of 1987.

During my interviews with veterans I picked up a great deal of folklore: songs, cadences, terminology, customary lore, jokes, legends and memorates. The veterans themselves were quite aware of this. “Do you know the difference between a fairy tale and a war story?” they used to ask me. “A fairy tale begins, ‘Once upon a time’ and a war story begins, ‘Shit, I was there!’” I was especially interested in the songs about the veteran experience, which are often sung at rallies and concerts at the Memorial, or by groups like the Last Patrol, who walk from cities around the country to the Wall to draw attention to the POW/MIA issue.

I have talked to singers and purchased cassettes at concerts and welcome home parades in Washington, New York, Cleveland and Philadelphia. News of my interest has spread; often I will be sent a tape with a note saying, “I sang with Mike Martin in Chicago and he says you are collecting vets’ songs.” The singers also send me tapes of the material which they or their friends wrote in Vietnam, or which they recorded during their tours. The widespread availability of inexpensive portable tape recorders in Vietnam meant that concerts, music nights at the mess, or informal bar performances could be recorded, copied and passed along to friends. An amazing amount of this material has survived and is circulated among veterans.

In the summer of 1983, Mike Licht, who was at that time working at the American Folklife Center, introduced me to an extraordinary collection of Vietnam War folksongs in the Archives of Folk Culture, made by the legendary General Edward Lansdale. The first part of this collection was made between 1965 and 1967, while Lansdale was serving as head of the Senior Liaison Office of the U.S. Mission in Saigon. The songs were recorded at Lansdale’s house by singer, composer and musician friends, both American and Vietnamese: Saigon government officials, soldiers serving as advisors to the Vietnamese, and civilians employed by USAID, the Foreign Service, CORDS, and the CIA. Lansdale put together a collection of 51 of these songs, with a narration explaining the circumstances of their composition and performance, and sent copies of the tapes to Lyndon Johnson and members of his cabinet and to several officials in Saigon, in an effort “to impart a greater understanding of the political and psychological nature of the war to those making decisions.” This is, as Les Cleveland has pointed out, perhaps the only example known to military history of folklore being used as a device for the transmission of intelligence. The second part of the collection was made after Lansdale returned to the United States in 1968 and consists mostly of taped material sent to him by friends and comrades from Vietnam and Thailand.

For the past five years I have been attempting, with fair success, to track down and interview Lansdale’s singers. In 1987 San Francisco filmmaker Cynthia Johnston, who is working on a documentary film about Lansdale, introduced me to his widow, Pat, and some of the members of his Saigon Senior Liaison Office team. They have been tremendously supportive of my project, giving me excellent interviews, research leads, and tapes from their Saigon days. Eventually, I hope to write a book about the folksongs of Americans in the Vietnam War, using the Lansdale collection as the focal point, and about Lansdale’s use of folklore, especially folksong, in psychological warfare.

The veteran community is aware of my research, and I occasionally am asked to speak about it to veterans' groups, including the incarcerated veterans in Attica. The staff of the Buffalo outreach center, as well as many other local veterans, have helped to teach my course on the effects of the Vietnam War on American culture. In the fall of 1987, Ernie Amabile of the New York State Vietnam Memorial in Albany commissioned me and Chuck Rosenburg, a Special Forces veteran singer, to produce a concert of Vietnam War songs on Memorial Day weekend, 1988. The concert, *Jody's Got Your Cadillac*, based primarily on material from the Lansdale collection and from my own collection, was extremely successful. It will be presented again in New York City this year and we are currently looking for funding to present it in several other locations in New York State, as part of an ongoing project to collect, preserve, and make more widely known the songs of the Vietnam War. Veterans are invited to send us manuscripts, songbooks or tapes of songs which they sang or collected in Vietnam and so far we have had very good results. A broadcast on Radio Smithsonian in the spring of 1988 also created a good deal of interest. In addition, my collection serves as a resource for veterans who are looking for songs; I mailed out more than one hundred tapes during the past year.

The military has never been a popular subject of study in American academia and military folk culture has been almost totally ignored by folklorists. The Vietnam War, which still has tremendous political resonance, seems to make the members of our profession particularly nervous. I hope that my work will help to introduce folklorists to a fascinating and vital tradition, and to show the great contribution which the military has made both to the making and the collecting of folksong. I also hope that, in some small way, it will help to bridge the gulf between the men and women who served in Vietnam and the men and women, many of them now professors of folklore or working in the public sector, who protested, or just ignored, the war. As one of my veteran singer friends says, "Everyone who was on the planet is a veteran of that experience."

THE FOLKLORIST AS CULTURAL CRITIC

Archie Green
San Francisco, California

As a child, when taken to a musical or theatrical event, I heard my parents voice "kulturni zachen." Then, these foreign words became an open sesame. We heard Feodor Chaliapin sing and Boris Tomashevski declaim. Kimono-clad Japanese schoolmates undulated in moon dances; Mexican playmates strutted in sombreros on the Cinco del Mayo: holiday. Half a century passed before I could formally assess these early imprints. Only in the 1970s did I consciously label myself a cultural-pluralism advocate, a critic of the nation's singular expressive direction.

In college years at Berkeley, I had found excitement in H. L. Mencken, Vernon Louis Parrington, Edmund Wilson, and Lewis Mumford. I knew them as critics of language and literature, landscape and lore. However, I had no clue as to how one became a professional reviewer. Nor did I sense the connection between a specific evaluation of a novel or recital and a statement about large societal values.

Cultural information bombards us daily. We peer into the lives of furlougee, skinhead, rock star, game-show model, sports hero, and TV evangelist. In reaction, some of us grope for analysis—mental elbow room, freedom to stand back. We gain personal autonomy by honing critical standards. To account for one folklorist's growth, I fall back upon anecdotal descriptions, steps on the staircase to cultural criticism.

During 1940, I had served in the Civilian Conservation Corps at a road camp in California's Siskiyou Mountains. Our Forest Service foreman, Lawrence Roberts—my first "Indian" teacher—taught raw city boys to work cooperatively and to read nature's signs. At that time, I did not know that Alfred Kroeber at Berkeley had pointed anthropology students to the Klamath River to gather Yurok and Karok tribal lore from Roberts' kin. I could not know in 1940 that decades might elapse before Kroeber's precepts also guided my actions.

After the CCC year, I undertook to learn the shipwright's trade on the San Francisco waterfront. My canny teachers, hailing from Scotland's Clyde River, carried arcane secrets and union strategies to the New World. They initiated me into an ancient craft community, and an enclaved ideological group (Local 1149), long before I became aware of the rubric "occupational folklife." The rewards of a skilled trade included the means to collect phonograph records of such figures as Haywire Mac, Leadbelly, and La Nina de los Peines.

At the University of Illinois in the 1960s, I served as faculty advisor to the Campus Folksong Club, and took pleasure in inviting, among others, Sarah Gunning and Glenn Ohrlin to perform. The former sang old Appalachian ballads alongside 1930s coal-mine topical numbers; the latter offered understated cowboy songs and stories. I saw no contradiction between studying Sarah or Glenn's songs in books, and helping each reach new audiences.

Club folksong fans used the terms "authenticity," "antiquity," "survival," "arrival," and "tradition" as keywords in defining tastes and goals. We felt that, artists within folk societies held rights to their material superior to those of interpreters and merchandisers. We accepted "moldy fig" and "old timey" as naming tags. We sensed the complementarity of public outreach programs and empirical cultural studies.

Although most Illinois Club members favored conservative singers over protest composers, we began to decode some of the truly radical impulses hidden in our actions. Recently, the chair of an American Civilization program at a distinguished university commented upon Urbana student days: "The Club was to me a counter-hegemonic institution, one of the first I clearly recognized as such; it was instrumental in my political awakening."

From Illinois, I stepped directly to the national political arena with stints at the AFL-CIO Labor Studies Center and the Smithsonian Institution. Mainly, I helped secure passage of the American Folklife Preservation Act by placing legislative achievement in the setting of vernacularity, artisanship, regionalism, and traditionality. I did not believe that tax dollars widely collected should nurture artistry and artifact for only a tiny section of the population. Beyond fiscal fairness, programs in the preservation/presentation of folklife seemed necessary to sustain an open society.

A 1976 report detailed our Act's history. (See "P.L. 94-201-A View from the Lobby" in *The Conservation of Culture*, editor Burt Feintuch, 1988.) In narrow compass the Act created a

Folklife Center in the Library of Congress. Broadly, Congress asserted value in American diversity and in the decentralizing of federal cultural efforts. Ultimately, it is this Congressional mandate that gives public folklorists confidence in moving from mainstream to backwater, from center to periphery.

Folklorists work regularly as teachers, writers, archivists, and collectors. In two centuries of nationhood, some governmental servants have quietly championed folk culture. However, it is in the last two decades that folk programs have proliferated in arts agencies, museums, libraries, parks, and schools. In part this expansion in sites and tasks stems from our sophistication in facing issues of tax-based funding and legislative procedure.

One example illuminates the ties of study, criticism, and action. During Washington lobbying years, I viewed Senate and House office buildings as an extended seminar room. Occasionally, I strayed off the Hill to talk in arts and humanities agencies. Visiting Nancy Hanks at the National Endowment for the Arts, I shared thoughts about art itself: contrasts between New Deal murals and the abstract expressionism of her era; unseen links in the seeming oppositions between avant-garde and folk art; community norms in evaluating folk artists.

Historical and esthetic matters led Miss Hanks to “price-tag” concerns on funding neglected and marginal programs. I have no pragmatic yardstick to measure the effects of my mid-1970s talks in NEA offices. Today, I applaud good work by public folklorists in national/state/local arts units. Like Janus, I look back to Nancy Hanks’ acceptance of one folklorist’s role as a cultural critic, and ahead to the advances of state folklorists from Alaska to Florida, Vermont to Hawaii.

A few academicians have long branded attention to civic cause and moral issue as debasing the coin of pure scholarship. Others have faulted public efforts as neglecting emerging lore, treasuring fossils, and disregarding contemporary media’s stamp on folklife. These positions continue to stir our discipline on campus and within civic bureau; no magic wand exists to dissipate polarities. Regardless of conceptual difference, folklorists, who join criticism to action, continue to present fiddlers, quilters (and their brothers and sisters) in public forums. In the end, these modest presentations speak to large issues: the social compact, the amplification of diverse voices in a democratic polity.

In looking back at personal steps to critical formulations, I hear the echo of parental “kulturni zachen” as marking expressive happenings: dance, drama, song, story. Creative teachers in classroom, CCC camp, union hall, and legislator’s office combined to shape an articulated commitment to cultural pluralism—a belief derived from William James and Horace Kallen. Some folklorists question Kallen’s formula as a sufficient guide for action. Such intradisciplinary disputes can ready us for large debate at national crossroads. Fortunately, in the decade ahead, many public servants in cultural domains will combine scholarship and advocacy, criticism and accountability. At our best we fulfill American promises.

THE FOLKLORIST AS CURATOR

Marsha MacDowell
Michigan State University Museum

East Lansing, Michigan

The Michigan State University Museum, founded in 1857, is a campus-based, land-grant state university museum that like the larger university institution is committed “to research, collection development and care, education, and public service, with an emphasis on the Great Lakes region.” The curatorial divisions include Education, History, Living Vertebrates, Invertebrates, Mammalogy, Exhibits, Archaeology, and Anthropology. In 1977, the newest division—the Folk Arts Division—was officially established with the appointment of two full-time co-curators, myself and C. Kurt Dewhurst. The division was created in recognition that the work on Michigan folk arts, which we had been doing for three years as museum research associates, was linked directly to the mission of the university and to the museum. The description of our positions was simply stated, “to continue research, documentation, collection, and presentation of Michigan folk arts.”

According to the “Code of Ethics” for curators developed by the Curators Committee of the American Association of Museums, “A Curator is typically a specialist in a field related to the collection in his or her care and is responsible for the overall well-being and scope of that collection, including acquisition and disposal, preservation and access, interpretation and exhibition, and research and publication.”¹ Whether or not a collection is curated by a specialist in a related field, and the extent to which the curator engages in all of the above activities depends directly on the museum’s size, type of collections, organizational structure, financial status, history, or mission statement.

At the Michigan State University Museum, curators typically are faculty appointments who hold tenure in an academic department and teach academic courses in addition to their museum curatorial responsibilities. Curators are expected to conduct and report on field- or collection-based research; oversee development, cataloguing, storage, and use of collections; and participate in the interpretation and exhibition of collections for both scholarly and general public audiences. The MSU Museum is tied through ongoing staff appointments and programming not only to other university academic departments, but also to the statewide Michigan Cooperative Extension Service and the Michigan Council for the Arts. Curators are expected to provide consulting services to these other organizations as part of the museum’s public service.

In the first few years of the Folk Arts Division’s existence, the lack of support staff and a limited budget restricted the scope of activities both within the division and consequently the division within the museum. However, as financial underwriting has improved and additional staff have been added, the activities of the division have greatly expanded. This divisional growth has had, in turn, a tremendous impact on the overall museum. First and foremost, the activities of the Folk Arts Division have significantly strengthened the museum’s abilities to carry out its stated mission. The division’s ethnographic emphasis on the investigation and interpretation of the culture of ordinary people in everyday contemporary life of the region has effected changes in collecting policies, exhibition content and design, and educational programming. A new category of objects was introduced into the collections. A brief description of the areas of activity of the Folk Arts Division and the impact it has had on the institution are given below.

RESEARCH

One of the strengths of working in a university museum that reports to the Vice-President for Research is that, simply, research activity is highly valued. I recognize that, unlike many of the situations in which my colleagues in other state folk arts programs work, the MSU Museum is a supportive environment for research activity. In the first few years at the MSU Museum, the research conducted by the two curators was primarily focused on broad general surveys of historical and contemporary folk arts in Michigan. These initial surveys provided the foundation on which many of the subsequent in-depth research projects by the curators and other researchers have been based. Research undertaken by the expanded regular staff (and sub-contracted consultants) of the Folk Arts Division continues typically to be conducted in conjunction with a planned public product, such as an exhibition, publication, educational program, or festival. The staff has also undertaken several large-scale, long-term research projects. For instance, five years ago the Michigan Quilt Project was initiated to systematically collect information on Michigan quilt-making. Through interviews, questionnaires, and photo-documentation, information on over 5000 quilts representing 3000 quilters and numerous quilting traditions has been gathered and entered into a computerized archival retrieval system. Other longterm projects underway include the Michigan Foodways Project and the Michigan Rag Rug Project. While individual staff members have continued to undertake small-scale research projects which would not immediately result in a public program, it is only recently that we have been able to begin to subsidize that research.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND CARE

Collections in the MSU Museum are gathered almost entirely through fieldwork and donations. In its 132 years of history, the museum has accumulated massive holdings including the 15th largest collection of agriculture-related artifacts in the United States and the 13th largest collection of mammals in North America. Staff and contracted consultants follow the policy and procedures guidelines for acquisition of artifacts for each division, which is part of the museum's overall collection management policy. As Curator of the Folk Arts Division, I am a member of the museum's Collection Management Committee and in addition attend meetings of the all-university Council of Curators (consisting Of all heads of collection-holding units). Since 1974, the Folk Arts Division has assumed responsibility for cataloguing materials resulting from folklife research field collections (tapes, slides, photographs, field notes, artifacts, etc.) and from donations of artifacts specifically given to the Folk Arts Division. Except for the artifacts, which are cared for by the History Division staff, all items are cared for by Folk Arts Division staff.

One of the ways in which the activities of the Folk Arts Division have impacted museum practices is in the realm of collection management. The set of procedures instituted for accessioning and cataloguing the collections of materials that resulted from folklife fieldwork prompted a re-evaluation of how fieldwork logs, photographs, site maps, and archival materials from other divisions were processed. The Folk Arts Division's focus on the collection of materials used in a contemporary traditional and regional context denoted another major shift in the overall museum collecting orientation. This focus has resulted in donations of materials as wide-ranging as a sneak boat used for duck hunting on the Detroit River near Pointe Mouillee, Michigan to a pasty wrapper from an Upper Peninsula bakery.

I have often observed that folk research project leaders have tended to consider that a field collection includes archival materials (tapes, notes, photographs, maps, etc.) but excludes artifacts. When publicly funded research on material culture forms is undertaken, I feel that is

incumbent on the researcher to consider the collection of objects as part of the final fieldwork collection. The MSU Museum Folk Arts Division's guidelines for collecting specifically outline the philosophical and ethical problems that a fieldworker encounters when doing work with a traditional artist. Research materials (including objects) resulting from publicly funded projects should be maintained in an appropriate public institution. Folklife research project leaders without collection-holding institutional homes have often encountered problems in finding an appropriate depository for research materials. The story has been often told about the number of state folk arts survey materials, which have remained in office or personal file drawers. I am convinced that a museum provides an ideal home from which not only research can be conducted, but also a place in which all field collections can be appropriately maintained in public trust and accessible for future use.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING, EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT, AND PUBLISHING

An area of intense activity by the Folk Arts Division staff has been the application of folklore theory to educational programming-including in-museum and outreach programs and development of curriculum materials. In 1977, I initiated FOLKPATTERNS, a major statewide folklife-in-education program, created in partnership with the Michigan 4-H Youth Service. Subsequently coordinated by other Folk Arts Division staff, the program remains one of our primary vehicles for educating youth about folklife materials and theory.

Along with other Folk Arts Division staff members, I have coordinated the presentation of artists and performers in conjunction with folk arts exhibits and other exhibits, served as consultant to folk-artists-in-schools programs, and conducted teacher-training workshops around the state. From 1985-1987, with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, I was able to coordinate the compilation of folk-arts-in-education resources drawn from individuals and organizations across the country. The resulting 350-page publication, *Folk Arts In Education: A Resource Handbook*, which I edited, included excerpts from curriculum materials, descriptions of model projects, a bibliography, and a listing of organizational resources.

Over the last dozen years, the Folk Arts Division has mounted over fifteen exhibitions examining folklife through artifacts, photographs, and text. I have served as curator, co-curator, or consultant to many of these. Among the exhibitions mounted have been "Michigan Hmong Arts," "Stories in Thread: Hmong Pictorial Embroideries," "Pasty, Sauna, and St. Urho: Finnish American Traditions in the U.P.," "Downriver and Thumb Area Waterfowling," "Grand Ledge Folk Pottery, and "Michigan Quilts: 150 Years of a Textile Tradition." These exhibitions have attempted to communicate to both scholarly and general audiences the contexts and relationships of maker, object, and community.

Because the museum has long engaged in the publication of research-based information, we were able to initiate a series of publications relating to folklife. As curator I have served as author, co-author, editor, and co-editor on a variety of publications.

In 1987, we combined research, exhibition techniques, educational design, and artist-presenting activities in the production of the first Festival of Michigan Folklife. As co-director of this event, I share responsibility for overseeing fundraising, budget, personnel, research activities, and program content. Now in its third year, this annual event has provided a central activity with which other exhibition, research, and educational programming is coordinated or launched.

PUBLIC SERVICE

The long-standing relationship of the MSU Museum to the statewide Michigan Cooperative Extension Service has meant that curators and other staff members have always provided free or low-cost consulting services to individuals and organizations in Michigan. With the formation of the partnership with Michigan Council for the Arts, the Folk Arts Division has been able to work with the state arts council in the review and change of policies concerned with the accessibility of funds to traditional arts and artists in Michigan. Two new public service programs undertaken by the MSU Museum in the last few years have been the Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (funded jointly by NEA and MCA) and the Michigan Heritage Awards. A portion of my time is devoted to the administration of this partnership and in sharing responsibilities for policymaking and program coordination with other staff members.

Folk arts research and programming in the MSU Museum have helped the museum to more effectively meet its mission by systematically collecting information and objects related to the everyday life of ordinary people, serving specialized audiences, providing a forum in which community members can express their identity, and expanding the ways in which audiences learn about the cultural beliefs and values of their neighbors.² As Curator of the Folk Arts Division I have been engaged in many facets of folklife research, teaching, public programming, and public service work. Because I have found that the institutional home provided by the university museum has proved such an ideal environment in which this work has been and continues to be supported, it surprises me that folklore scholars in recent years have not more vigorously pursued employment in museums. Certainly museum professionals were key players in the formative years of the American Folklore Society. As Simon Bronner pointed out in *In Folklife Studies from the Gilded Age*, “Whereas many museum professionals with a natural interest in artifact collections joined the American Folklore Society in the early years, more academics with less concern for objects later took up the rolls.”³ Early member and museum curator Steward Culin once called for museums to form collections which would convey the ideas about folklore to the public. “As folklore deals with ideas, so it would be the mission of the folk-lore museum to collect, arrange, and classify the objects associated with them. Such a museum would form an essential part of a museum of ethnology, and would serve an admirable part in supplementing the existing collections of art and archaeology.”⁴ In the nearly one hundred years since Culin made this call for more folklore scholarship in museums, relatively few folklorists have responded. As members of the American Folklore Society reflect on this first century of growth, I hope that they will recognize that museum professionals have not only played pivotal roles in that growth but also that museum-based folklore work remains an important arena of activity for the future.

1. “Code of Ethics.” *Museum News* 61:3 (February 1983, pp. 38-40).
2. For a good description of one museum-based traditional arts program, see June M. Anderson’s “Something Special: A Museum Folk Arts Program as Community Outreach,” *Museum News*, 64 (February 1986): 50-57.
3. Simon Brenner, In *Folklife Studies from the Gilded Age*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987, p. 40.

4. Stewart Culin, "Object Lessons," in Simon Bronner, ed., p. 254.

THE FOLKLORIST AS DRAMATIST

Robert McCarl
Idaho Commission on the Arts
Boise, Idaho

I grew up in Oregon. After my obligatory years as an "Oregonian" paper boy, I spent my summers picking beans and berries in the valley, mucking out cow barns on a Roseburg farm, and joining my first fire crew at age sixteen. Without being aware of it, this exposure to a variety of jobs led me to an awareness of, and an appreciation for, the stories and legendary exploits of my predecessors on these jobs. More than cautionary tales, these narratives reduced the information necessary to survive by compressing an awareness of technique into highly imaginative and compelling dramatizations. Without knowing it, I was responding to a level of occupational folklife that continues to fascinate me to this day: the relationship between the spoken word and the physical activity it both depicts and assesses.

As a graduate student at Oregon, Indiana and later Memorial, I was primed for the performance approach before I ever studied the literature. The western literary tradition from Jack London and Stuart Holbrook through Kesey and Norman Maclean weds the practical realities of work to an appreciation for the artistry of a well-told story. In a parallel manner, the open verse poets from Ferlinghetti to Mike McClure and most significantly (to me) Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, took poetry off of the page and into the streets. As Hymes, Tedlock and others would later point out, the printed page should more accurately portray the performed word by carrying the energy and strength of the speech act from the writer through the reader/performer. All of the stories became (directly or indirectly for me) dramatizations of skills or attitudes toward skills. I left Indiana to work on the Smithsonian's bicentennial festival and there I got an opportunity to test these ideas in a highly unusual, public forum.

My very first fieldtrip found me lugging eighty pounds of video equipment aboard a fleeting towboat right in front of the arch on St. Louis's freezing waterfront. My task was to find "something" to put on the mall, and since I knew this was the first of some sixty forays into the working gut of the country, I decided that I better learn my skills fast. What I found was that I was a fool, playing a fool's game and likely to get killed in the process. Five minutes out in the almost sleepily malevolent current of the Mississippi, our small boat was stuck on a sand bar and turned sideways, heeling over until the gunwhales on the port side disappeared under the brown, quiet water. I could see people walking merrily up toward the arch, cars humming over the bridges to the war zone that is east St. Louis, and quiet but determined discussions taking place between our captain and the engine room as they worked us off the sand bar. The vast array of skills brought into play during that tense ten minutes of precarious work could never be accurately portrayed, but they exemplified the techniques, priorities, values and artistry of this trade. Later that night while sharing a beer with Captain John and his crew I listened as our close call earlier in the day was laid up alongside its predecessors, eye-balled and jawed about for fit. I began at this point to better understand the festival context because I felt that I could, at least, stage the narrative portion of the work experience on the mall.

The festival area we constructed for the seafarers and inland boatmen consisted of photographs of both deep sea and inland maritimes tradespeople at work, ships models and even a mockup set of timberheads, cleats and bits used to demonstrate line and breastwork used in the trade. This pale depiction of the inland boatman's work, however, could never be considered a dramatization. It was a physical, work-like context within which cable-splicing and breastworking skills could take place. The lack of interest in this skills area was matched by the desultory presentations by the SIU demonstrators and the malaise of the ever-feverish folklorists hovering around our area. "This isn't folklore," was a continual leitmotif of our festival experience. This lack of concern on the part of folklorists for the emerging traditions of the workplace continues. It is due, I think, not only to the lack of rusticity or romance within the industrial arena, but more to the ability of many working people to resist and challenge outsiders' notions of their needs and skills.

I use the SIU presentation because it illustrates the arrogance of this type of public contextualization, which relies on the museological conventions of item-oriented display within which the worker is simply installed like another item. In spite of these limitations, spontaneous interchanges between festival goer and cable splicer did take place. In some of our narrative sessions, the tension and excitement of the verbal or technical performance transcended the wood-chipped and color-coded artificiality of the mall to create a dialogue that had meaning to both the towboatman and the festival visitor. I recall at one point our cable splicer engaging a group of VIPs (including the Dillon Ripleys) in a heated diatribe against foreign shipping and its destruction of the American seaman's way of life. Punctuating his points with practiced stabs of a marlin spike, the old bossun got so loud and excited that the splice seemed to form itself by the sound of his voice alone. Twisting wire between his bunched forearms, he railed on about his glory days as a deep water sailor when America had ships, the industry had guts and (by implication) he had reason to be proud of his trade. The reason that this sticks out in my mind is that it was one of the times during the festival that our artificially created context actually resulted in a dialogue reflecting the true dialectic in the trade between the skills, the narratives and the power of an individual's point of view and that of an outsider. In spite of our attempts to control the context, the bossun took control of our "display" and made it work for him.

It has been twelve years since I worked on that festival. I have spent half of them completing my degree, working in an anthropology department and more recently, making my living as a public sector folklorist. I have had a great number of occasions to act as a dramatist-documenting and presenting fire fighter, Native American drum maker and Mexican American corona-maker alike. As my experience grows, my confidence in both the theories and the practice of these presentations falls under greater scrutiny by myself and the people I present. Increasingly, I see my job as providing a forum within which conflicting and often highly emotional issues of personal and community value and power are being worked out. I am much less confident or interested in academic assessments of these dramatizations, and much more interested in the reactions of the tradition-bearers themselves. I have learned that a cowboy poem told by a third generation rancher who is filing for bankruptcy, or a Lemhi saddle made by a young girl who is struggling with her Indian identity in a hostile white community, are not texts designed to entertain outsiders or folklorists. These are struggles which pit individual need and artistry against ethnocentrism and the capriciousness of change. I cannot and should not see myself as a dramatist in the sense of presenting these dialogues as entertainments against a pleasing backdrop of models and photographs. The drama is inherent within the hands and minds and

bodies of the people I meet and engage as a folklorist. Like Olson's Maximus, the power of the human act/message simply passes through me. My skill is tested in my ability to transfer that power to the audience as clearly and honestly as possible.

THE FOLKLORIST AS EDITOR

Judith McCulloh
University of Illinois Press
Champaign, Illinois

When I first joined the University of Illinois press as an editor in 1972, I heard comments to the effect "Oh, it's too bad you couldn't get a real job teaching." At first that troubled me. Then, as the job market changed, the inquiries changed to "How did you ever land that great job?" The more I thought about that earlier criticism, the more I realized that through the books I could help send into the world—Bob Cantwell's *Bluegrass Breakdown*, Norm Cohen's *Long Steel Rail*, Archie Green's *Only a Miner*, Bob Hemenway's *Zora Neale Hurston*, Sandy Ives's *Joe Scott, the Woodsman-Songmaker* and *George Magoon and the Down East Game War*, Debora Kodish's *Good Friends and Bad Enemies*, Nolan Porterfield's *Jimmie Rodgers*—I had the power to reach and influence more hearts and minds, in a lasting way, than many other folklorists have through their classrooms.

Let me outline briefly what I do at the Press. At every single point I've had occasion to draw upon my training and experience as a folklorist, to work from a folklore perspective as well as an editorial perspective. The teaching allusion actually covers more than just the audiences I hope my books reach. It extends to my dealings with authors, potential authors, manuscript readers, and other outside consultants. It also extends to my dealings with colleagues at the Press and within the larger publishing community.

Mainly, I acquire and develop book manuscripts. I'm a talent scout, an A&R person, for manuscripts. Through correspondence, phone calls, attending meetings, talking with colleagues, reading books and journal articles and reviews, and generally keeping eyes and ears open, I try to find out what books need to be written and who can write them.

I respond to inquiries, proposals, manuscripts, and hot tips. If a prospect looks likely for Illinois, I work with the author (as time permits) to develop it into optimum shape; arrange for readers' reports; encourage or decline projects (if the latter, trying to suggest other appropriate publishers); negotiate revisions; work up financial forecasts based on size of press run, estimated production costs, and the going price for similar books; conduct market surveys; ask other publishers how comparable books have sold; present the case for publication to our Press Board; arrange for contracts and explain why royalties can't be more generous; look for (or help authors look for) subsidies; write letters supporting grant applications; advise copyeditors about special features in a manuscript; check music transcriptions; undertake some layout (especially on the music books); consult with the production department about using disks or tapes; consult with the art and design staff about illustrations and format; check whether permissions are needed and whether they're all in hand; advise the rights-and-permissions department about copublishing possibilities; negotiate terms for copublication, distribution, or paperback reprint arrangements;

track schedules; advise the marketing department about review lists, ads, direct-mail pieces, class-adoption, exhibits, and first-serial-rights possibilities; write some catalog and jacket copy; organize and mind exhibits; note prizes and awards for which books should be submitted; do other promotion; write policy statements; fill out innumerable forms and attend lots of staff meetings and generally work late into the night.

Which hat I don—that of folklorist or editor—depends on who I’m talking to, who I’m trying to persuade about what. Although I notice that sometimes the “we” shifts imperceptibly between the two, and occasionally I hear that I want to publish certain manuscripts not because they’d make good books but “only because I’m a folklorist,” I think I keep things reasonably straight. Scholarly publishing is a business that has to deal with intellectual excellence, fine writing, and economic survival all at the same time. Balancing the ideal world and the real world requires constant vigilance.

I would like to be able to publish more folklore books (as I would like other presses to publish more folklore books), but the really outstanding manuscripts and the market are limited.¹ At Illinois, folklore is an important but relatively small part of our list; moreover, it’s only part of my editorial assignment. That means I have to be very selective about when to encourage folklore projects, when to “spend points” arguing for books that I know are important, even if they’ll probably not sell lots of copies. The best books, I believe, are those that will be as significant a quarter-century from now as they will be next year. I created Illinois’ Folklore and Society series precisely to provide such models. Making judgments about what’s profound, about what’s narrow or faddish, about who is or could be an important author is risky business. Knowing folklore, its history, its practitioners, and its potential gives me courage to take those chances and means to fight for the books I want.

I don’t win all the time (no editor does), but I do pretty well, and each successful book makes the way a little easier for the next one. It’s fair to claim, I believe, that Illinois has published some outstanding folklore books that might have gone elsewhere or might not have come into being at all if I had not known to go after them, to respond favorably to inquiries, to serve as an enthusiastic and knowledgeable in-house advocate, to influence effective promotion and marketing. The immediate reward is seeing a good project develop, then holding the first copy of the book before sending it on to the author. The lasting reward, speaking as an editor, is knowing I’ve enhanced the Press’s stature as a scholarly publisher. As a folklorist, it’s knowing I’ve helped shape the quality and course of the discipline.

1. I’ve tried to do something about this; see “Writing for the World,” *Journal of American Folklore*, 101:402 (July-September, 1988), 293-301.

THE FOLKLORIST AS FILMMAKER

Tom Rankin
Delta State University
Cleveland, Mississippi

On a sultry August morning in 1983 I was helping film a reunion, here at the Rock Springs Baptist Church in Granville County, North Carolina, for a documentary film project co-produced by Tom Davenport Films and the Curriculum in Folklore at the University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill. We were filming the 49th annual Harris-Landis-Lawrence-Byrd-Green Reunion service at Rock Springs, the oldest black church in that community. The Landis family, exceptional gospel singers and one of five families that gather annually for the service, are central to the celebration at Rock Springs. Bertha Landis, one of the original organizers of the reunion, is the matriarch of the family and in many ways of the reunion. We had filmed throughout most of the reunion service that began at 11:00 a.m. Tired and hot, the film crew of Barry Dornfeld (camera), Allen Tullos (sound), Brett Sutton (sound), Dan Patterson (sound), Tom Davenport (director), and myself (camera) exited through a side door to enjoy the shade of a large oak tree and whatever breeze came our way. As we sat, we talked among ourselves about what we had just seen and how it might look on film, how it might work into a finished film, and what we needed to do next. It was nearly 12:30 and after over an hour of filming I was relieved to get to take the heavy 16mm movie camera off my shoulder for a few minutes.

Not long after we relaxed with the feeling that the service was “winding down,” we heard the sound of emotional congregational singing. Quickly and a bit disorganized, we assembled our equipment, took our places in the church and began to film the action. Fleming Landis, Bertha Landis’ third son who now lives in Akron, Ohio, had begun to sing “Union in Heaven,” a hymn written by his mother. A powerful song, “Union in Heaven” has special significance for the Landis family and the Rock Springs community. The combination of Fleming’s powerful voice and the song’s message had the church erupting with emotion. Fleming handed the microphone to his brother Claude who led the song for a verse or two, and, then he passed the lead to Tony, another Landis brother, who in turn passed it to John Landis. The song ended with Tony, the youngest son of Bertha Landis, embracing his brothers and mother in the center aisle of the church. I saw all of this through the lens of the camera as I moved to follow the action into the aisle of the church, trying to anticipate who might sing next while also paying attention to technical considerations like focus and exposure. My memory preserves those moments just as I saw them through the lens. When I watch it in the finished film—*The Singing Stream* (1986)—I get the same chill of emotion I got that August day.

We nearly missed that scene while we regrouped outside in the shade. And then, in a certain sense I think it was our position outside that allowed the song and celebration to begin. We left and the spirit entered. And then we re-entered. As the Landis brothers and the church performed, so did we. We took our positions, Barry with one camera, me with another, Allen crawling on the floor with the microphone in hopes of staying out of the frame, and Tom Davenport directing me as I attempted to follow the passing of the microphone from one brother to the next.

Since those first experiences with Tom Davenport and Allen Tullos, I have worked on other films, most often with Barry Dornfeld, first in the making of “*Dance Like A River*”: *Odadaa Drumming and Dancing in the United States* (1985) and more recently with Barry and Jeff Titon on *Powerhouse for God* (1988). On both of these films the work has been necessarily collaborative. Decisions are made as a group, with discussion and debate sometimes lasting weeks before a general consensus is reached. This occurs from beginning to end, from the initial shooting of the footage to the final cuts in editing. Barry, Jeff and I chose to make *Powerhouse for God* in large part out of friendship. To be sure, Jeff had the perspective of over 10 years of research and documentation with Reverend John Sherfey and his church (in fact, Barry and I first

learned of Rev. Sherfey in classes with Jeff at Tufts University); but, for me at least, it was our friendship and desire to work collaboratively that drove us to make the film. And, ultimately, the same friendship is what made the project enjoyable.

My interest in making films has always paralleled my interest in folklife studies. For me, they are difficult to separate. I came to both through the study of American social and cultural history, and at the same time that I “discovered” folklore as a discipline I was simultaneously beginning to work in photography and film. “. . . The camera seems to me,” pronounced James Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, “next to unassisted and weaponless consciousness, the central instrument of our time.” Influenced deeply by Agee’s words and the images of his fellow “spy” Walker Evans, I gravitated toward the camera, eventually making it the “central instrument” of my own work. As I learned more about the camera I was simultaneously understanding more about the complexities of folklife research.

Agee, I believe, placed more faith in the objectivity of the camera than I do. Film-making requires many decisions that influence the final product: what to include and exclude, who to interview and who to pass over, which songs to film and which songs to ignore, just to mention a few. And even within these decisions film makers direct “informants,” requesting certain songs “for the film,” asking for a story to be told again or arranging for a family gathering in order to film family activity and interaction. Throughout the editing still other decisions are made as to what to include and what to let go of. With each one of these decisions the film makers play a very strong hand as they slowly fashion a product that interprets the subject matter as they see it. I think the most successful folklife films are, in a way, fictions; they are carefully constructed interpretive narratives that are true to the lives, traditions, emotions, motivations and histories of the people and place.

The successful documentary film can transport viewers, however briefly, to places and events they would never see on their own. Likewise, the sheer carrying of the camera can give the photographer an “excuse” to enter and observe in places he or she doesn’t necessarily belong. However, at least with documentary films about folk culture, the medium of film also offers a chance to support, verify, and reinforce the indigenous subject matter of the film. Hopefully made with trust and understanding from the subjects of the film, this kind of documentary becomes not only a collaborative effort among the film makers, but also a kind of collaboration between the film makers and the people or community represented in the film. Make no mistake, however, the filmmakers are nearly always in control, though the subjects can become active participants in the production phase of the film.

We recently showed *Powerhouse for God* to the congregation at the Fellowship Independent Baptist Church in Stanley, Virginia. Some 75 church members were present, along with most of the Sherfey family. This was a moment I had long anticipated, for not only did it signal near-completion of the film project (something filmmakers begin to long for after several years of fundraising, production and editing), but it also was a chance to feel the response of church members and the Sherfey family, whose lives, beliefs, and traditions we were trying to represent with honesty and integrity.

After the nearly hour-long film ended and the lights came on, we asked Reverend Sherfey—the central character in the film and the church—what he thought. “I laughed, I cried, and I almost shouted,” he responded slowly, an emotional quaver in his voice. Hours later I reflected on his

comment and thought how in the making of *Powerhouse* I had experienced a similar range of emotions. There are many reasons to make films, many of mine having to do with a desire to communicate an understanding of folk culture to a broad “public” audience. However, underlying all such reasons is the fact that I largely do it because I enjoy it. Though the catalysts for our emotions were very different, working with John Sherfey and his community provided me with the full plate of emotions. And, simply put, that makes for good and fulfilling work.

THE FOLKLORIST AS PERFORMER

Carol Silverman
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

If I hadn't been a Balkan folk dancer and folk singer, I probably would never be a folklorist today. In my case, the path led from being a performer to studying performance, and the two roles have continually intersected, both in complementary and conflicting ways.

Before I knew what “folklore” was (that is, a discipline), I was passionately collecting it in the form of songs, dances, and costumes in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and performing it at festivals and coffee houses in the New York area. I viewed myself as an imitator, striving to copy the best Balkan singers with my limited resources. When the opportunity to study folklore at the University of Pennsylvania presented itself, I thought, “Great, now I can really understand those singers over there.” Little did I realize that I would be studying myself too! I spent three years taking classes at Penn, but every weekend I commuted to New York to rehearse and perform with *Zenska Pesna*, a women's Balkan vocal group.

One of the most rewarding things about being a performer of the traditions one studies is the hands-on quality of immersion and involvement—tactile, technical, emotional, aesthetic. The first time I produced the correct Balkan vocal sound was a thrilling moment; the subsequent refinement of that sound has given me more insight into (and respect for) Balkan singers than years of passive listening. When one learns a performing art through participation, as opposed to observation, all of the senses are involved and one is challenged to shift point of view in profound ways. One begins to make aesthetic decisions, not merely to observe them, and one, furthermore, suffers the consequences of those decisions, good or bad. In one Bulgarian village, my rendition of a local ballad was greeted coldly because the variant I had chosen to sing came from a rival village. I quickly learned to pay attention to village origin as well as to region, context, technique, and a host of other factors.

Being a singer was a tremendous asset to fieldwork in the Balkans. It provided a role for me that was somewhat understandable to villagers and allowed rapport to develop along established lines of pupil/teacher. In studying the training of professional musicians, I was able to participate in classes at a folk music high school as well as observe them. I not only investigated the process of transmission, but I also was involved in it myself. I have heard similar sentiments from my husband, an ethnomusicologist whose mastery of the Bulgarian *gaida* (bagpipe) gave him a strong identity in the community, and from a student of mine who used her “passport” (a towel she had woven in Bulgarian style) to establish instant rapport with weavers.

Mantle Hood, in advocating “bimusicality,” the mastering of another musical tradition plus one’s own, commented that participating as a performer should be a constant habit of the ethnomusicologist, and should be considered one of the “essential energy-building habits for the sterner stuff of which academia is made.” However, while many ethnomusicology programs feature classes in performance, these classes are often not regarded as academic or necessary. Folklore programs are even more pronounced in their neglect and sometimes disdain for the “doing of” performance. In Bulgaria, most professional folklorists are suspicious of researchers who perform. In the United States, folklorists have sometimes had to conceal their performing activities or risk academic credibility. This attitude is quite ironic, considering that the opposite is stereotypically expected by lay people: the folklorist is supposed to show up with a guitar and entertain! So while the public says entertain, the academy says don’t. Some folklorists have, unfortunately, had to choose, but others have managed to combine roles.

What is the origin of academia’s ambivalent attitude of respecting performance when done by “the folk” but not when done by a folklorist? My feeling is that it is tied to the emergence of the discipline as “scientific,” and the perceived need to establish “objective distance” in the cultural “laboratory.” A “performing scientist” just doesn’t fit the image. In more recent years, of course, the whole question of objectivity has been reexamined and the reflexive interactive nature of all fieldwork, whether performance-oriented or not, has been explored. Folklorists who perform are often in a unique position to investigate the issue of reflexivity, beginning with their own experiences.

In some cases, being a performer leads to a presence that is quite prominent, whether intended or not. In one Bulgarian village I was outfitted with a local costume and pushed to the front of the dance line (a position of honor) on St. George’s Day. I ended up prominently featured in a film of the event that my husband shot. What a wonderful pastime for students to try to identify me in the line of short stocky women! During recent fieldwork among Macedonian *Roma* (Gypsies) in New York City, my dancing at a New Years’ Party gave me a prominent role in videotapes sent to relatives in Yugoslavia.

Performing ultimately led me to study myself, to ask what kind of performer I am and how my performance of Balkan music in the United States differs from performance in the Balkans. I realized that, unlike Balkan villagers (but like ensemble singers), I sing multiple regional styles, that I classify repertoire differently from them, that I sing in totally different contexts from them, and, further, that they employ different criteria to judge me than to judge themselves. I also realized that there is no category for me in the standard National Endowment for the Arts-derived classification system: I am neither a “folk artist” nor a “revival artist” since I lack Balkan ancestry. A Russian Jew from the Bronx singing Bulgarian music does not fit into preconceived schemes. I’m all the more anomalous because I sing older village music as opposed to the more popular forms that young Bulgarians sing. And yet there are numerous people in the same category (even prominent folklorists), from Whites playing Black blues to Blacks playing Yiddish music. This phenomenon is certainly worthy of increased scholarly attention.

Finally, becoming a folklorist has made me a more responsible and self-conscious performer. No longer do I throw around words like “authenticity” and “tradition.” I am more careful with terminology and with presenting the contexts and the historical circumstances of the people whose music I sing. When I teach Balkan singing to other Americans, I often ponder the sticky

question of whose music it is. For me, even after sixteen years of singing, I still feel like an imitator rather than an artistic creator. I know that I can never be Bulgarian no matter how perfectly I master Bulgarian singing. Others may see themselves more readily as creators or even as “natives,” but for me the role of educator is most congenial. I see all performers as implicit educators and the folklorist/performer as a particularly effective educational combination. In my case, this path has been very rewarding.

THE FOLKLORIST AS PUBLIC SERVANT

Robert T. Teske
Cedarburg Cultural Center
Cedarburg, Wisconsin

Cedarburg, Wisconsin, lies approximately twenty miles north of Milwaukee, along what was once a foot path traveled by the Menomonee and Potawatomi Indians. Irish, English and a few Yankee settlers reached the area during the 1830s, but German immigrants were responsible for beginning the first community in 1842. Nestled along the banks of Cedar Creek, Cedarburg became an early milling center with five fully operational mills by the time of the Civil War. Today, the community of 9,000 still looks to its mills as a source of civic pride. The impressive five-story Cedarburg Mill, a stone structure constructed in 1855, stands tall at the very center of the community. The Cedarburg Woolen Mill and the Concordia Mill in neighboring Hamilton also remain standing, largely as a result of the community's early recognition of the benefits of historic preservation.

When Cedarburg celebrated its centennial in 1985, a group of residents organized a weekend exhibition of artifacts related to the community's history. The exhibit reminded those responsible for its planning and presentation that no permanent repository for such materials existed in Cedarburg. While the community's historic preservation efforts had produced an impressive array of carefully restored buildings and structures, the contents of those stores and shops, home and factories were rapidly disappearing. The exhibition organizers quickly concluded that Cedarburg needed a museum. Drawing upon the community's long-established tradition of volunteer service, more than 100 residents began meeting to plan the new educational facility. Over the next two years, the group formed a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization and secured space in Cedarburg's historic Lincoln School Building for the storage and exhibition of its incipient collections. More importantly, the group also took care to define the organization's goals very clearly. They determined that the outcome of their efforts should be more than a museum; they decided instead that a “cultural center” would better satisfy the community's needs. In addition to developing, preserving, and exhibiting a permanent collection of artifacts relating to Cedarburg's history, the planning committee felt the center should look to the community's cultural heritage and sponsor a variety of programs and civic events relating to Cedarburg's vital contemporary culture.

With these goals in mind, in 1987 the Cedarburg Cultural Center's board of directors began their search for a qualified, professional director to implement their plans and to play a major role in shaping the community's newest cultural facility. When I first met with the board, I was impressed not only by their commitment and professionalism, but also by the breadth of their

vision. As a folklorist interested in ethnicity and material culture, I was accustomed to “transforming” myself to meet the expectations and demands of the arts organizations, English departments, and historical societies, which employ most members of the discipline. In this instance, however, I found that such a “transformation” was unnecessary. My interest in folk art, my appreciation for Cedarburg’s pervasive German heritage, my desire to flesh out the skeleton of local history with exhibitions documenting customs and traditions were not viewed as “related” or “supportive” but rather as “germane” to the director’s position. The combination of clearly defined goals, a sympathetic board, and the opportunity to work with a new organization from its very inception made the position seem a dream come true. I jumped at the chance.

The Cedarburg Cultural Center opened its doors on Sunday, April 10, 1988, ten weeks after I began work as its director. Its inaugural exhibitions, entitled *Images of Cedarburg*, featured paintings of the community and its surroundings by Bernhard Schneider and Edmund Schildknecht, academically trained artists who lived in Cedarburg between 1893 and 1927, and selections from the extensive collection of historic photographs of the community assembled by long-time Cedarburg resident Edward A. Rappold. In addition, one of the four classrooms of the 1894 Lincoln School occupied by the Cultural Center was restored to its 1920-1930 configuration in recognition of the building’s ninety years of service to the community as elementary and/or high school. Approximately 1,000 people attended the opening celebration, and during the festivities Ed Rappold announced the donation of his 1,300 photographs to the Cultural Center’s permanent collection.

Throughout the course of the Cedarburg Cultural Center’s first year of continuous programming, many of the organization’s exhibitions and related presentations have reflected my interests and my influence as a folklorist. During the summer of 1988, the exhibition *The Malone Family Farm: A Century in Cedarburg* explored the area’s agricultural heritage by focusing on an 80-acre farm passed down over three generations from one of Cedarburg’s earliest Irish settlers. At the same time, the Cultural center also mounted *Simple Pleasures: Summer Recreation in Old Cedarburg*. In conjunction with this exhibition, which examined sports and games, the County Fair, a local resort called Hilgen Spring Park, and the community’s many brass bands, the Cultural Center sponsored a series of Sunday afternoon community band concerts on the lawn of City Hall. These popular concerts demonstrated the continuation into the present of the old German tradition of civic bands not only in Cedarburg but in other southeastern Wisconsin communities as well.

During autumn of the same year, the Cultural Center complemented its exhibition of contemporary works of art and craft by members of the Cedarburg Artists Guild with *Cedarburg: A Tradition of Craftsmanship*. This small show presented early examples of utilitarian crafts from the community—barrels, baskets, quilts, and a fire department hose cart—beside Old World antecedents brought here by early settlers and later manufactured variants. Winter of 1988-1989 brought an exhibition of “feather trees,” an early form of artificial Christmas tree made of goose feathers wrapped around wire branches. Originally developed in Germany, the trees played an important role in the holiday celebrations of early immigrants to Cedarburg and other heavily German communities. In order to place the exhibition in the broader context of ethnicity and its influence on life in the Upper Midwest, the Cultural Center sponsored a one-day symposium entitled *Christmas Past*. Funded by the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, the program featured slide lectures by folklorists on topics including Swedish *Ijuskrona*, Norwegian-American Christmas mumming, and the display of outdoor holiday decorations.

Throughout spring of 1989, the Cedarburg Cultural Center presented an exhibition of quilts drawn primarily from Ozaukee and Washington Counties and other parts of southeastern Wisconsin. All the quilts displayed were discovered through a "Quilt History Day" program held six months prior to the opening of the exhibition. Nearly 150 quilts were photographed and documented during the day's programming by volunteers from Cedarburg's Heritage Quilters Guild, and the results of the documentation were made available to the Wisconsin Quilt History Project, a statewide survey in the early stages of development.

All of these programs have been a delight and a challenge for me as a folklorist. Happily, they have also been extremely well received by the Cedarburg community. Not only have Cedarburg's residents attended the Cultural Center's exhibitions and related programs in substantial numbers, they have also shown extraordinary support for the organization in other ways. Nearly 300 local residents have become members of the Cultural Center during its first year. Many of them have also served as volunteers, installing exhibitions, guiding tours, planning programs, and working with student groups. In addition, community members have donated artifacts to the Cultural Center's permanent collection and graciously loaned items from their personal collections for temporary exhibitions. The residents of Cedarburg, in other words, have taken the organization which they conceived, planned and developed to their hearts. They have made a commitment to it, taken responsibility for it, and made it an important part of life in Cedarburg today.

As a folklorist, I feel privileged to have worked so closely with the Cedarburg community in realizing its dream of a cultural center. It has been gratifying to see exhibitions addressed to traditional culture attended and appreciated; to see the relationships between past and present, folk culture and fine arts understood and accepted; to see long-time residents and newcomers united in their efforts to learn about and learn from Cedarburg's past. If I have helped this community's lifelong members to value their heritage more highly, if I have helped Cedarburg's many recent arrivals to understand what daily life was like for early settlers, if I have helped the many tourists drawn to the community by its historic structures and antique shops to grasp the forces of ethnicity, occupation and religion that shaped its character, I feel I have made good use of my training as a folklorist. I have returned to the community all that it has given to me.

THE FOLKLORIST AS PUBLICIST

Elaine Eff
Maryland Cultural Conservation Programs
Baltimore, Maryland

From 1985 until 1989 my mission as Baltimore City Folklorist was to identify, document, preserve and promote traditional culture as found in that urban center. The first three tasks, the stuff of folklore, are learned as part of our academic fieldwork and skills training. To "promote" or "present" the fruits of our labors, however, calls upon creative resources and networks which are normally the realm of the public relations or marketing professional.

Once, folklorists were content to share their findings with other folklorists, with their students or with the world of readers of the arcane or familiar. Buoyed by the increase of public sector folklorists, the need to develop new audiences through new communication channels has likewise expanded. Progressive public outreach in the form of community and museum-based exhibitions, festivals, workshops, and tours are inexorably linked to existing publicity networks within print and electronic media.

When I approached Baltimore's four-term Mayor with the seemingly far-fetched idea to add a chronicler of urban traditions to his city's list of firsts, I knew he saw promise in the union of preservation and promotion. Challenged by the opportunity to bring Baltimore's folk culture to the forefront, my term as Baltimore City Folklorist and Director of Baltimore Traditions may have officially begun with the now ritual distribution of a simple press release. It served two immediate functions: to announce the position and gain the attention of future informants and audiences. The media thus hastened and stimulated the educational process, while helping to define folklore for a previously unidentified constituency.

With proper nurturing and respect, the media provides immeasurable benefits, at no cost, by building audiences and sponsorship while legitimizing our efforts through the creation of memorable ephemeral and tangible records. The rewards of an amicable, even symbiotic relationship with journalists and marketing specialists are considerable.

Baltimore Traditions' Rolodex and its successor in the State of Maryland's Cultural Conservation Programs has its usual A-Z listings, but is distinguished for quick reference by a front "Media" section. At my fingertips for immediate recall are cards for "Calendars," "Sunpapers" (the local daily), "Weeklies," "Out-of-state," "Radio," "Television" and "Freelance writers."

The activities or findings of the folklorist, if presented enthusiastically in the proper time frame to the appropriate staff person rarely fail to capture interest. Folklife subjects offer the human side of current events, the non-controversial "feel good" antidote to hard news. During Christmas, a slow news time, I suggested photographing a Ukrainian "Blessing of the Baskets." It made the front page in color, and acted as an important catalyst to a drive for a new church building for the group pictured. Such unsolicited tips probably added to a reliance on our office for ethnic information. In turn, when preparing for the numerous ethnic festivals celebrated locally, their planners have relied on us to suggest the appropriate feature writers until they develop their own network.

In Baltimore, our office has pioneered a number of non-traditional avenues, which borrow a page from the world of advertising, including engineering a local bank's donation of a billboard at one of the city's major crossroads. The message invited locals to contribute their knowledge to a research project, at the same time creating a visible presence for the folklore office. Similarly, free-standing installations featuring historic and contemporary photographs resulting from a community study were exhibited in non-traditional "galleries"-stores, offices and public buildings, as an immediate way to return research to the participants while announcing future phases which could involve local participants.

We cannot rely exclusively on the traditional publicity channels even though our leads fill their voids while the free press coverage simultaneously answers our needs for advance publicity or

later affirmation. Poor attendance at a recent folklife film festival was attributed to the last minute loss of *The New York Times* feature on which organizers short-sightedly depended.

Activities sponsored by our office seemed to draw media attention but only when accompanied by a press release and personal follow-up. We can never assume that a good program necessarily attracts an audience. Like it or not, we must hand feed the press, often courting them weeks in advance and repeatedly, to assure the assignment of writers and photographers. The process requires saintly vigilance.

Avenues worth pursuing include radio talk shows, which are frequently segmented and rebroadcast. Noontime news television chats, albeit short, address an entirely new audience. An easy route is to submit occasional OpEd pieces or occasional letters to the editorial pages, thus eliminating the middle-man. Folklorist Jan Brunvand used late night television to promote his urban folklore volumes, becoming so popular that his newspaper column was syndicated nationally. Nebraskan Roger Welsch was such a reliable informant for CBS Television's Charles Kurault when his "On the Road" reached the Plains, that now Welsch himself is a regular feature on "CBS Sunday Morning."

"Calling the Folklorist" for a rundown on what projects are on tap, for opinions on timely preservation issues and to get relevant quotes and leads on subjects as varied as rumor, ethnicity, holidays (the requisite Halloween "Ghost" call), or local characters is a regular occurrence and an important part of nurturing a positive relationship with the press. We learned to anticipate certain cyclical calls with the preparation of fact sheets. We wonder to this day who fields the myriad of calls processed daily, before this office's creation and since its closing.

All the publicity we can gather in this field helps, especially when we are faced with constant fundraising from the private sector and when our own staffs are notoriously short on development and public relations personnel. Name and program recognition are vital, and despite continuous staging of public events, the biggest numbers and a certain legitimization come from print and electronic media. "I read your article," "I heard you on the radio," may go a lot farther than the memory of a mega-festival which attracted thousands, exacted months of toil and is rarely matched with its dedicated producers.

If there is a negative side to public attention, it would be the way in which press events must be molded to cater to their formats and deadlines. "Can we do this live?" means arranging a special schedule for TV cameras. The presence of camera and microphone wielding reporters is intrusive. The featured activity and artist is compromised by the necessary, albeit hurricane-paced staging.

I was amused recently when the press liaison of a co-sponsoring agency showed up at an event with a filmless 16-mm movie camera perched on his shoulder, "to make it look like a media event."

A special kick-off press conference for a recent photographic exhibition brought together artists, community leaders and old-timers to share their stories about the featured locations. The event's completion was marked by packing each of the photo stands in an awaiting balloon-bedecked van to begin distribution of the exhibition along its five mile route. The designated reporter for the leading daily courted by our office for weeks, not only did not show, but called 3 hours later

to find out if the 20-minute event was “still going on.” Because a feature story was so important for a permanent record of the novel installation, the principals begrudgingly agreed to reconvene the following morning to recreate what they could of the event for the story.

We must not overlook the importance of publicity. The press helps us reach the numbers that we need to get future grants, to prove to our sponsors that we serve the public and to provide much-needed appreciation for our efforts.

The press alone, however, cannot be relied upon to do the important job of networking with allied professionals, developing grassroots support, updating mailing lists and distributing well-designed information in appropriate locations. The many new hats the folklorist wears today cannot help but turn around a regressive perception of what folklore is as it certainly impresses the public with what folklorists do.

THE FOLKLORIST AS PUBLISHER

Marta Weigle
University of New Mexico
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Publishing prompts considerable concern among those who would perish without accomplishing it. The enterprise is no less anxiety-provoking in those whose livelihood or at least partial solvency depends on some success in meeting a publisher’s primary responsibility, “to publish abroad,” i.e., to perform the task etymologically inherent in the verb, which comes from the Latin *publicare*, “to make public.” This is a matter of publicity and marketing, not simply soliciting, acquiring, and editing manuscripts.

I came to publishing by way of Ancient City Book Shop, a small Santa Fe bookstore then selling out-of-print titles and Southwest paperbacks in the historic Sena Plaza, a block east of the Palace of the Governors on the main plaza. When I met him in 1961, Ancient City proprietor Robert F. Kadlec was launching his first publishing project-native New Mexican architect William Lumpkins’s pioneer work on adobe architecture, *La Casa Adobe*. A premier bookman originally from Chicago, Kadlec had met Lumpkins and many other Southwesterners and aficionados of the Southwest through a longstanding Santa Fe custom newly revived and adapted by him and his partner Nancy Lane, proprietor of the other Sena Plaza bookstore, Villagra Bookshop. The town’s second bookstore, Villagra opened in 1927 and soon became known as a center for art colonists, Santa Feans, and tourists. It for many years maintained a tradition of daily literary/gossip sessions featuring martinis delivered at 4:00 p.m. by waiters from the nearby La Fonda Hotel. In the early 1960s, Kadlec and Lane offered mid-afternoon Eskimo Pies to both customers in the store and locals who regularly stopped by to enjoy these informal and informative occasions. Ancient City Press’s next three books—my own on *The Penitentes of the Southwest*, John F. O’Connor’s *The Adobe Book*, and Lorin W. Brown’s (writing as Lorenzo de C6rdova) *Echoes of the Flute* on Hispano village folklife—grew out of those gatherings. Kadlec introduced us to one another and to other helpful, like-minded persons and worked with us to develop our manuscripts. Unfortunately, both Ancient City Book Shop (but not the Press) and Villagra Bookshop have since closed.

Real bookpeople (booklovers and booksellers) like Kadlec stimulate interest not just in books but in the lore of an area generally. They create and sustain a distinctive audience and market, and their businesses are places to meet people, to exchange book news and gossip, to do research, and even to initiate fieldwork. Without their perspective, enterprise, and enthusiasm small press publishing at least would fast become parochial, vanity, or simply in vain, and the corporate, actuarial approach to publishing would prevail over the more daring, grassroots ventures.

In 1981, several partners and I entered this “grassroots” arena by joining Robert F. Kadlec in Ancient City Press, Inc., which is now held by Kadlec, myself, and Mary Powell, who currently serves as president and general manager. We have tried to define a middle ground in regional publishing between the large popular presses, the university presses, and the very small, specialized presses with only a few titles. We publish four to six titles a year.

Our books are for the most part perennials, with modest but continuing sales. (Some ten thousand copies of three printings of my Penitente book have been sold since 1970.) Many of our titles are reprints, a good way to maximize earnings while minimizing production costs. Cookbooks and children’s books sell very well, and both are represented on our list, which contains a range of titles from the very scholarly to the contemporary guidebook.

Ancient City Press has built on the adobe architecture and Hispano folklife emphases Kadlec established and added Native American and Anglo titles and other books of regional interest. Many of these are tourist-oriented, since tourism and recreation are the major industries in New Mexico, if not the entire Southwest. (The largest book market in the region is at the Grand Canyon, but its annual millions come from the sale of a very few, carefully screened titles. New Mexico’s equivalent is the Chimayo Valley just north of Santa Fe. Traditionally a bustling trade, weaving and pilgrimage center, the old Hispano community now thrives on both religious and secular/tourist pilgrims year-round.)

The dilemma for the academic folklorist is to “publish abroad” attractive books while not compromising the scholarly integrity of the discipline. In the case of the titles we distribute for the Archaeological Society of New Mexico, the Center for Land Grant Studies, the Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Regis College, and the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, this presents no problem. I have encouraged students to prepare manuscripts, but to date only Elizabeth Kay’s *Chimayo Valley Traditions* has reached fruition. Because of our reputation, we frequently receive proposals from native New Mexicans (Anglo, Hispano, and more recently Indian), and I met Elba C. de Baca of Las Vegas this way. My editing work with her on *Two Guadalupes: Hispanic Legends and Magic Tales from Northern New Mexico* was carried on by mail, just as much of my work with Lorin W. Brown had been in the early 1970s.

Many of our books come from professional colleagues whose work I already know-though editing still must be negotiated. We can grant more latitude than university presses-and sometimes more, or at least more long-lasting, sales. I am particularly pleased at the opportunity to bring out The New Deal and Folk Culture Series, “folklore, oral history, drawings, and documentary photos collected during the 1930s and early 1940s by workers on the ... New Deal projects ... volumes [which] will present previously unpublished ‘gems’ from New Mexico and other states.” Chuck Perdue’s contribution to this series, *Outwitting the Devil: Jack Tales from Wise County, Virginia*, is our first venture outside this region but certainly well within the field

of folklore/life. In this I am able to accomplish some of what Ken Goldstein and his Folklore Associates partners in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, did in furthering folklore by publishing otherwise-inaccessible works.

In her 1987 presidential address (*Journal of American Folklore* 1988: 293-301), Judith McCulloh urged folklorists to understand “the basic concept ‘book’” and to “write for the world.” I would hope that more and more folklorists can school themselves to break the myopic, publish-perish, parochial bonds and envision a wide-ranging, interested public whose community is in part generated and enlivened by well-published books.

THE FOLKLORIST AS RECORD PRODUCER

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“It’s only a phonograph record
But it carries my message to you”¹

Those lines from a Charlie Monroe song immediately came to mind when Charles Camp asked me to write about my experience as a record producer. My next thoughts were about the term “producer,” with which I was not entirely comfortable. The record industry really doesn’t agree on a word to describe what I and other folklorists have done in this domain. The activity, somewhat akin to that of what record companies used to call A&R (“Artist and Repertoire”) men, varies from record to record, but parallels present day activities performed by film “directors,” by museum “curators,” and by “editors” in the world of publishing. On my cv I use the phrase “Records Edited” to describe my work in this area.

Like many other American folklorists of my generation I was introduced to folk music through phonograph records. As a teenager I purchased pop and r&b singles, but it was the LP album, a new medium in the fifties, that captured my imagination. The experience of sitting by the phonograph and reading the notes as the record played was an exciting kind of puzzle-solving in which the aural and written pieces were fitted together. The albums I liked best were those which had notes that took you band by band through the record, carefully explaining the actual sound the way a good map explains the real world. In the fifties new LP albums of Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, Jean Ritchie, Jesse Fuller, and Pete Seeger on Folkways, Riverside and other specialty labels had brochures or liner notes which told about the music and its history, and about the performers and their lives. They were written by people like Kenneth S. Goldstein, writing in what I now recognize as the tradition of Child’s headnotes. They made the listening experience intellectually as well as esthetically challenging.

Since then many folklorists have been involved in the production of albums which present field recordings, newly-made studio recordings, or reissues of earlier recordings. In all cases the goal is the same—to show how a group of recordings relates to a social context with folkloric dimensions.

The first step in producing an album is arriving at the concept. This requires negotiation between the record label, which may be privately owned or part of a public institution, and the producer. Sometimes the producer may suggest a concept; in other cases the producer may be asked to respond to an idea put forward by the label. In either case the producer must possess the knowledge about the materials needed to realize the concept.

The next step in putting together such records entails bringing together the contents by creating new recordings or locating previous recordings. Today folklorists rarely publish everything they collect. Instead we choose from the repertoires we study those performances deemed significant and useful in illustrating the points we wish to make about individuals, cultures and traditions. Making such choices for reissue albums requires expertise in a special kind of historical archeology called discography.² The original recordings-either in the form of acetate, metal or tape masters, or copies of the rare original printings of 78s or 45s-are artifacts. The digging one does to unearth them is a combination of bibliography and ethnography; the goal is not just to locate these publications, but also to date them, name the performers, and identify the contents. The result is an historical outline of the event at which each recording was made. To this researchers must add their own knowledge, based on field and library research, of the wider social milieu represented by the recordings.

Most of the albums that I have worked on present bluegrass music. I approached them as a folklorist who wanted to show how this body of music was relevant to the interests of the discipline.

Each album I have edited has, in the selection of its contents, reflected a number of competing criteria. These criteria reflect ideas which folklorists have been developing about repertoire-how it is created, used and maintained. Bluegrass is a relatively new form of music which has its own canons. Its audiences and performers recognize certain songs or tunes as being part of the standard repertoire. Usually these are compositions by bluegrass pioneers which have become well-known and widely performed. I have been able in some cases to issue the original versions of such standards. I have also sought to include songs that existed in tradition before bluegrass emerged and had been recorded by more than one bluegrass band, thus reflecting cultural continuities. In addition I wished to include performances which may not have become part of the standard repertoire but were considered to be classics within the genre. I also placed on my list songs that interested me as a folklorist. Even though they may not have held prominence in the bluegrass performing repertoire, they were of interest either because of their wide-spread distribution in oral tradition, or their borrowing of content from other realms of folk expression, or some other dimension which seemed worth pointing out for folkloristic reasons. Also of interest were newly-composed songs which utilize older structures, forms and techniques. Finally, as an historian of the form I wanted to place in print the musical performances that I was writing about.

Whether intended for specialists or not, record albums which present folkloric materials are rarely purchased only by folklorists-there are many other people who are interested in the material we study. So the challenge in producing such albums is to present ideas of relevance to the discipline in a way that will be accessible to non-specialists. Consequently, like a folklorist curating a museum display of artifacts relating to a traditional process, I attempt to structure the contents of the liner notes and the sequence of the album cuts to lead the listener through the album.

The sequencing itself must be carefully considered, for the aural portion of the album has a life of its own—some people do not read the notes. So the listening experience must be organized to give a sense of pace and variety to keep the listener's attention. I particularly enjoy this part of the editing, as I try to anticipate the responses listeners may have to the record the first time they put it on the turntable.

Today the 12" 33 1/3 LP album is being squeezed out of the marketplace by cassettes and compact discs. I have yet to work with these new formats, but although neither allows the same amount of space as the LP album for written commentary in brochures or liner notes this is not necessarily a liability. One can use at most a few thousand words to realize the concept, but it is possible to accomplish much by juxtaposing carefully organized aural items along with a few well-chosen words. This can lead the listener to new insights unforeseen to the producer.

1. These are the last two lines from the chorus of "It's Only A Phonograph Record," as sung by its composer, Charlie Monroe, accompanied by his Kentucky Partners, on RCA Victor 20-2304 (D7V13-0353). Recorded in Chicago, Illinois, March 24, 1947, it was subsequently reissued on two LP albums: in 1967 on Victor of Japan RA 5257, *Golden Blue Grass Highlight, Vol. 3: The Best of Charlie Monroe*, and in 1969 by RCA Camden CAS-2310(e), *Who's Calling You Sweetheart Tonight*. This discographical information comes from Richard K. Spottswood, "The Commercial Recordings of Charlie Monroe," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 3.11 (May 1969): 3-6; and from my personal record collection.

2. I discuss these techniques in "The Folklorist and the Phonograph Record: An Introduction to Analytic Discography," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 3.2 (1981): 125-35.

THE FOLKLORIST AS TEACHER

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Why do I teach folklore? Why does this discipline live at the center of my life? Or, should I ask, do I really teach folklore at all? Don't I teach, instead, a subject into which I and many of my colleagues grew only after we had been trained by the "then" experts in the field? The answer is not surprising; it is the same in many fields, especially those in the humanities and the social sciences today. Yes, we teach our fields of expertise, and yes if we have been worth our salt we have continually changed ourselves, our approaches, and much of our subject matter through insistent dialogue.

But the academic world is becoming dramatically different from what it was when I first began teaching twenty-six years ago. It is under attack from without, and at the same time it is experiencing major upheavals from within; purse strings are tight; cross-disciplinary studies and even mainstream disciplines have taken to teaching what many folklorists had begun teaching long ago; new fields have developed Centers and old fields have appropriated new domains. Cultural studies, American studies, women's studies, and popular culture courses cry out for the

expertise of folklorists, yet there are increasingly few specific calls for folklorists to fill advertised positions in colleges and universities. We have a problem.

The problem is not, as some claimed before, that we need to “professionalize” our field;¹ we have supposedly done that. But “professional” or not, as teachers we have failed to make our students valuable to the current academic community. This is evident if you make even a short list of scholars who are the trained folklorists known outside of folklore circles by those in the mainstream of current intellectual discourse.

Such a list certainly would include Susan Stewart, whose doctorate in folklore from the University of Pennsylvania was mentioned only as a minor footnote by President Barbara Herrnstein Smith who introduced her at the 1988 MLA Convention. Susan Stewart was one of three honored speakers at that convention who presented major papers in a highlighted session entitled “Breaking Up/Out/Down: A Presidential Forum on the Boundaries of Literary Study.” Her work is brilliant and insightful,² and it is deeply grounded in her folklore training. But Susan Stewart is seen by our fellow academicians as an English professor, not as a folklorist. And she is not the only folklorist who is visible only through identification with departments and programs which fit currently acceptable categories within the academy. Folklore is not on that list of valued fields of study. We might be “professionalized” but we are not seen as relevant.

Do not misunderstand me. I am well aware that a folklorist by any other name, is. But how can our students obtain jobs if folklore is not regarded as a relevant discipline? Certainly there is a place for what we teach in the academy, not just room for it in the public sector. (And we realized long ago that unless one is a sound scholar one can not be a decent public sector folklorist.³)

If we look about us, we would see new fields emerging, which have interests very similar to ours. Therein, I think, lies the answer to our quandary. One such area is cultural studies, and it presents us with a good example of how we can learn from, and also contribute to, a common intellectual community. By working as folklorists with and within these fields we can, by example, show our professional worth.

Catharine Stimpson, an articulate voice in the nascent field of cultural studies, writes in her book *Where the Meanings Are: Feminism and Cultural Spaces*⁴ that as a child she was taught a “dualistic theory of culture: ‘high culture,’ to be respected and feared, and taught in the classroom, and ‘low’ or ‘popular culture,’ to be ridiculed and enjoyed, and passed down outside of the classroom.” Instead of validating this dichotomy of arbitrary categories, she continues, “One of the humanist’s jobs is to show their synchronic relationships: to map how they fit and move together.” Does this sound familiar? One of the folklorist’s prime tasks as a teacher is to effect this “bringing together,” even while working within a college or university whose very structures perpetuate the dichotomy. There are others out there who are interested in what we do; we are just a bit better trained than most scholars to deal with the value-ridden categories of “low” and “popular.”

Folklorists are painfully aware that the hierarchies of our academic world(s) trivialize much of what we study. I teach folklore, in part, to reveal the arbitrariness of those encrusted hierarchies, the folk traditions of the academy. And both the subject matter and the approaches I teach are congruent with the postmodernism that is transforming higher education.

I am not proposing that teachers of folklore rise up and deal the academy its death-blow; rather, I am suggesting that in the current transformation of higher education, folklore can find a sound and respected role. We can redefine our place as scholars and teachers, but as we do so we will have to realize that folklorists can no longer think of themselves as the only ones who know and teach about the everyday world or the ignored past. One glance at the journal *Cultural Critique* should tell us that. It features new approaches to subjects from Mozart to Mardi Gras; the theme for its special issue for fall, 1988, was “Popular Narratives, Popular Images.”

It seems to me that in order for us to continue teaching what we do so well, we must “reprofessionalize” our field. We must look around and look forward rather than looking back. Instead of canonizing and validating ourselves as an outdated hegemony, we must work in concert with those who have at long last come to regard folklore as worth studying. While we certainly can offer new insights into the canons of traditional disciplines, it just might have been a gross mistake for us to attempt to fit ourselves into the academic power hierarchies of the 1960s and 1970s, a time when the boundaries of what were “acceptable” studies were beginning to shift.

If our “professionalization” failed us, then in some ways that failure can be seen as a blessing. What we need to do now, through both teaching and scholarship, is to reach out and work with those who share our vision. We can do this if we take a twofold approach: first, we must show that folklore can reveal new insights into the subject-matter of established disciplines; second, we must stay current with emerging fields of study and share our insights with them while learning from their work. When I teach I can not forget that folklore can engage both the student of the canon as well as the student who questions the worth of examining those works.

Phyllis Gorfain shows us how we can gain new insight into Shakespeare through the study of riddles,⁵ and Carl Lindahl illuminates canonized Chaucer in *Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales*.⁶ Bruce Jackson enters into the new areas of discourse when he articulates major concerns about the very data we use in our courses. His article, “What People Like Us are Saying When We Say We’re Saying the Truth”⁷ alerts the student to both the problems and the richness in reported data, and it addresses imperative questions of central interest to contemporary anthropologists and literary critics.⁸ The panels on “Authenticity,” organized by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for the 1985 American Folklore Society meetings, opened new categories of material for our study and for our teaching.

I find teaching folklore exciting today because both the subject matter and the approaches I use are amplified by the most constructive aspects of postmodernism, which is changing the academy in vital and exciting ways. As a lone folklorist in a department of English, I no longer feel myself on the fringe of the acceptable academy. These days I approach work with a knowledge that both my students and many of my colleagues share my devotion to my subject; no longer do I need to “convert” entire classes.

Fatiguing as it may be, I know that to continue teaching folklore I must continue learning. I know that I have no respected academic tradition, as do the established and canonized fields, which can protect the old “itemistic” ways of thinking (if that were the way I thought). Yes, I realize that it is still possible to teach folklore as a colonialist. Presenting folklore out of context, using of it for our own purposes in the classroom or in our studies, should be past. More of us did

it than we might think. (How many of us gave a course on the Child Ballads with almost no social context?) We no longer collect the traditions of human beings as if we were popping in and out of curio shops, a practice I call “colonial collecting.” We know enough of power and of politics to realize that such practices tell us nothing about how people express themselves, while they tell us all too much about ourselves. I assume that any folklorist trained in the careful heart of the discipline today knows enough to place folklore in context, or at least to show how it was once collected in a non-contextual way for very specific historical-intellectual (to say nothing of political) reasons.

The very marginalization of folklore, and of us as scholar/teachers is what can lead us either to the frontiers of the changing academy or leave us behind with the antiquities, curios in some academic collection, to be discarded when there is a pinch for room. There is a value in teaching folklore if for no other reason than that it has been the field which has studied the marginal and marginalized. And the study of the disenfranchised is of central interest to currently emerging fields. Even though folklore also has studied the traditions of the empowered (for even CEO’s use proverbs) ‘ it has been marginalized, ironically, for its unorthodox subject matter as well as its inter-disciplinary methodologies. Folklore simply has not fit. Our discipline has suffered a fate similar to that of its subject matter. But the areas of our study have finally been recognized as fit for intellectual consumption. Times do change, but we must be ready to respond to the changes.

Tomorrow I will go to the university and teach folklore because I believe it cultivates a way of looking at the world which allow us to live our lives as fully as possible. I will continue to teach folklore because it keeps me alert to the changing world which physically surrounds me as well as to the world of intellectual discourse. The job requires persistent and humble explorations through all manner of new ideas. It produces a relentlessly different syllabus each year. I do this work because I am devoted to the maverick ways of thinking and to the marginalized materials with which folklore requires me to live. And I am devoted, too, to the understandings it forces me to have of the “mainstream,” the currents of both every-day and academic life. I know that as a teacher I can help my students view the world in ways they have not seen it before, ways which will allow them to live both practically and intellectually more fully than they ever thought possible. And I implore them to take unfortunate cultural categories such as “high,” “low,” and “popular,” and treat them each with equal care and respect.

1. Richard Dorson sought this goal in 1957. See his reprinted paper in *American Folklore and this Historian*, “A Theory for American Folklore,” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 47-48, where he says “Ultimately American folklore will take its place alongside American literature, American Politics, the history of American ideas, and other studies that illuminate the American mind.”

2. See for example, *Nonsense* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) and *On Longing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

3. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s incisive article which traces the history and clarifies the rationale for public sector work, “Mistaken Dichotomies,” *JAF*, 101 (1988), 142-155.

4. (New York: Methuen, 1988). See her essay “The Humanities in Everyday Life,” p. 166 for the cited following quotes.

5. Among her many works, see “Remarks Toward a Folkloristic Approach to Literature: Riddles in Shakespearean Drama,” and “Contest, Riddle, and Prophecy: Reflexivity Through Folklore in *King Lear*,” *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 40 (1977), 143-157.
6. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1987.
7. *JAF*, 101 (1988), 276-292.
8. See James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture; the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), as well as Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, eds., *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).