

RICHARD CHAPIN

November 9, 1999

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is November 9, 1999. We're at Michigan State University, East Lansing. I'm Dr. Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Richard Chapin, for the MSU [Michigan State University] Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial of the institution, to be celebrated in 2005.

Dr. Chapin, you understand that we're taping today, and you give me permission to record you today?

Chapin: Yes.

Charnley: Okay. What's your educational background and educational professional background?

Chapin: Well, I went to school at Wabash College, was in the V-12 program, so then had some time in the service, went back, finished at Wabash, then went to Illinois and got a doctorate in library science, and left there and went and worked for Florida State, and then went back to Illinois to get my Ph.D., and I got it in communications, figuring that library science was not going to be library science that much longer.

So I got a degree in communications, and then worked at Oklahoma, and then came up here to get new experience. Well, that was in '55. I was going to get a little more experience, then going to move on.

[Laughter]

Charnley: In 1955. What was your initial position here at Michigan State?

Chapin: I came as associate director, with the intention that I would take over when the current person was through, unless I really fell and stubbed my toe.

Charnley: Who was the head librarian then?

Chapin: Jackson [E.] Towne.

Charnley: Dr. Jackson Towne.

Chapin: Jackson Towne. Right. And, you know, with Jackson and the one before him-I forget her name right now-the three of us have a hundred years. Now, that doesn't happen anymore.

Charnley: Amazing continuity. When you first arrived at Michigan State, how would you assess the library system at that time? Where was the library located then?

Chapin: The library was located in the museum, what is now the museum building, and my first job was to move the collection into the new building across the street where the present library is. That building was built, and in the fall of '55, we moved, and really started operating out of there in January of '56.

Charnley: So as soon as you got here, you had a major task.

Chapin: My first job was to get that move done.

Charnley: So you weren't involved in the initial planning of the layout of that building?

Chapin: No, no.

Charnley: So you said it was already done?

Chapin: Right. The building was completed. I mean, it was, you know, practically completed when I got there.

Charnley: Was the library, the system set up, was it a central library or were there diverse libraries around campus, or were they smaller? How was that organized?

Chapin: Michigan State, compared with most major schools, big schools, is pretty well highly centralized. At that time, we had maybe ten departmental libraries. Now there are fourteen or something like that, so it has been pretty highly centralized.

Charnley: When you first became the director of libraries, what did you see as the biggest challenges that you faced?

Chapin: Oh, the biggest challenge I faced when I became director was to bring it up to where it belonged. We had a university that was much better than the library, and so if we didn't bring the library up, the university was going to go down, so the biggest thing was to just bring about change, big change. We had to have money for books, we had to do a bunch of things. And I was very fortunate. I got here at a great time. In the sixties, things were growing, and [John A.] Hannah realized that the library was a mess, and that we had to really do something about this. And, you know, 750,000 volumes when I became director, and this is just unreasonable for a school like Michigan State University.

Charnley: Do you remember, when you left office, how many volumes there were? Not that you counted them.

[Laughter]

Chapin: Three and a half million, so it grew quite a bit. Five times. When you think of that, when you think of growing from 750,000 to three million volumes, but let's just cut it back to two million volumes. At that time, we figured that you could stack ten volumes in a square foot. Okay, so now we're talking about, we needed 200,000 square feet of new space, just to house the collections, not counting the increase in the student body and all that sort of stuff. So when you start moving to big libraries, then you've got space problems. Things have changed. Now they've got compact shelving. We began, years and years ago, I guess in the sixties, we began storage libraries, off campus. We got someone to rent us a warehouse.

Charnley: For items that weren't used regularly?

Chapin: Yes, that were little used items that we put out there, you know, and then we could retrieve them when people wanted them. And what they've done now in the library is gone very much to compact storage, where you'll have one aisle in twenty feet instead of four aisles in twenty feet.

Charnley: Thinking back to those first days when you came to Michigan State, can you remember your first impressions on campus? Any of those from those days, can you recall like an average day's thing that stick in your mind?

Chapin: I think that when I first came on campus, I was so intrigued by the beauty of the place and the bigness of the place, and the recognition from everyone that I talked to, that the library had to improve. I mean, there was no one saying-well, the only one who might have said the library didn't more money was Walter Adams. [Laughter]

Charnley: So you got into some controversy with him over that issue?

Chapin: Oh, yes. Well, in a council meeting once.

Charnley: Well, with limited resources, everybody fighting for the same dollar.

Chapin: And this is why I brought this over with me today. In Hannah's memoir, the question was asked, "Do you recognize a continuing need for improving library resources, and do you recall what happened?" And this is his comment, and he says, "The library at Michigan State in early my days as a president was pretty puny, and we had to make changes." And so he was supportive of us from the very beginning.

I found that all the faculty and all the deans, it's easy to get to be number two on everyone's list, and that was what my goal was. I didn't want to be ahead of the engineering dean's list, number one. I wanted engineering to be number one, but I wanted to be number two. [Laughter] So the support was there. I mean, really good support.

And what do I remember? I remember when we were first moving, I got the fraternities together to help us move on one Saturday, and so the kids were going to bring the libraries from the museum over to the new building, and we'd stack them. So they ended up handing them to me and I took them, put them on the shelf, took them, put them on the shelf. And I tell you, after that day, I was pooped. [Laughter]

Charnley: So you handled all of those books.

Chapin: But the students, even the students, they were having a good time, you know, and some of the girls brought some food over, Cokes and stuff, over for them, so it was fun.

Charnley: So it was like a community activity.

Chapin: Yes, right, right.

Charnley: So Dr. Hannah was very supportive of it?

Chapin: Yes.

Charnley: I mean, the perception, some people think he was all sports and not so much on academics by some people. But his support for the library you see as a real-

Chapin: I think that if he hadn't been there, if he hadn't been very much in our corner on the thing, I would have left. I wouldn't have stayed.

Charnley: So he was a strong support.

Chapin: Yes, his support was there. I mean, it was very obvious. And, you know, he got the money.

[Laughter]

Charnley: What were the sources for the specific library funding? Do you remember any of those early things?

Chapin: The sources of funding was really state funds. And Hannah, I don't know if this is true or not, but the story around was that Hannah says that it's the responsibility of the legislature to fund the university. Now then, the word seems to be it's the responsibility of the deans to get their own money.

Charnley: The staffing budget. So you found that some of the issue of budget, those early budgets that you had, that you faced, that they were increasing, or did you find them adequate?

Chapin: They were increasing. They were increasing, but they still weren't enough, but I mean, you could see they were on their way up. We had a situation where we worked under Dean [William H.] Combs, called University Services, and had Ronald Baker in the museum and Charlie [Charles F.] Schuller in audiovisual, and they were the three people, basic people, that Dean Combs worked with. And all of these programs were growing programs, I mean programs that needed to grow if there's going to be a university. See, I came right at the time that we became a university.

Charnley: How did you balance staffing, in terms of your budget, staffing versus books? Were most of the resources directed toward that? Were there problems in staffing in the early years, in the sixties?

Chapin: Problems in staffing? I guess if I made any mistakes-I don't think this is a mistake. I mean, people might have thought it was a mistake, but I was emphasizing the collection rather than staffing. But the staff we had was actually really, really great staff. I mean, great people who were working and came in at the same time, and it became their library.

Charnley: Any notable ones that you just want to list here?

Chapin: Henry Koch, who worked with me on the collection development thing. Carol McMillan, who was technical services, and Bill Stoddard in social sciences, and Mladen Kabalin in sciences. Florence Hikock in reference. I mean, you know, these are all people that just were superb, and they had good staff, good staff working with them. And so we weren't as highly staffed as University of Michigan and some of these others, but we got the job done because we really had good people.

Charnley: Automation. It seemed like, in doing some of the background preparation for this interview, I looked at some of the files relating to automation, that seemed to be an area that you were recognized nationwide or even international reputation.

Chapin: Well, early on, as I told you, I went back and got my degree in communications rather than library science, so you could see the way I was beginning to think, that it was going to be a bigger thing than just books, books and periodicals. I think it was in the early sixties I took leave and went to the National Agricultural Library and worked for the summer, because they were in the process of beginning an automation effort, and so I was there early on with that one.

Charnley: Was that in Washington?

Chapin: Yes. And you spent the summer helping them do the planning and so forth and learning from their planning.

Charnley: In terms of the automation that was at that time, obviously the technology's changed, but what was the big-was it in cards or was it in tracking-

Chapin: Oh, yes. IBM cards. IBM cards, yes.

Charnley: And that was used for circulation?

Chapin: Circulation, basically. I mean, the basic use of it was keeping the circulation system going. In fact, it was in the early sixties that I went to IBM Management School. They had management. I've still got my little notebook that says "THINK" on top of it. [Laughter]

Charnley: How did you find the people here at the campus? Were they responsive to that idea of automating the library?

Chapin: Oh, yes, I think most people were. I don't think there was any great resistance, but as we went along, and then we started saying, "Well, we will microfilm collections instead of having a hard copy," then we started getting some resistance, you know. That was a different sort of automation. Finally, just before I left, I decided that I had to throw away the card catalog, and that it would be best if I did this, instead of having somebody else do it, having my successor do it. So I have a picture in *State News* of me throwing the cards up in the air. I got a lot of irate letters from faculty members at that time. Some of these people have now told me, they say, "Dick, I wrote you that letter, but sure is nice checking the catalog from home." [Laughter]

Charnley: So you were almost here at the beginning, in terms of that technological change, to see that.

Chapin: Right.

Charnley: And to the end where you went to magic and the card catalog.

Chapin: And then, you know, the online access to collections and hard copies, and make copies at home.

Charnley: Which is the new trend and the new direction. What was your role in acquiring the Vincent Voice Library?

Chapin: What was my role? That's an interesting question. There was some guy from ATL, I forget his name, but he was the one who found Vincent, found this collection, and then talked to Vincent. Then he talked to me,

you know, "Think we could get this guy to come out and give us his collection?" And I said, "Let's arrange a three-way conversation with Bob on the phone." It was a three-way call, for your office, my office, and Bob. So we got this arranged. He got cut off. [Laughter] He got cut off, so here I am, talking about Vincent, and I said, "Who are you?" [Laughter] And so I then went out and visited Bob, then I had him come out here and visit us, and made the deal at that time.

Charnley: Where was he living at the time?

Chapin: California. So I went out to see him, then we had him come here. It didn't take very long, I mean, once we made contact. He'd given the collection at one time to Yale [University] and then he got mad at Yale and took it back. [Laughter]

Charnley: That's interesting. Do you remember when Maury Crane got involved? Was he the initial director, or was there someone else?

Chapin: Well, no, Bob came. Bob came and ran the thing, and then when he was ready to-well, he should have retired before, and I finally said, "Now, Bob, you have to retire. You can't work any longer." I had been told that. He had to go, because he was in his seventies. And at that time, you didn't have the option. Like, when it came time for me to retire at sixty-five, I had to leave. I had no choice.

But anyway, Bob left and then we were looking around for someone, and Maury volunteered, so we latched on to him, put him in charge of it, and away it went.

Charnley: It's interesting, now with the growth of the National Gallery of the Spoken Word and how important that's going to be, in the nation and worldwide.

Chapin: Yes, and they're in the process of digitalizing it and everything.

Charnley: What was your position on this issue of central library versus a distributed library system? What position did you take, or did it change over time?

Chapin: Well, I don't think I had to take a position, because I was deciding what it was going to be, and we just could not afford a highly decentralized collection. I mean, that takes much more in the way of staff, much more in the way of collections and so forth, and we were striving to build a research library, and that was the priority, to build a research library, so that was a centralized program. And so that's why it was so highly centralized, really.

Charnley: The organization of the graduate section of the library, an undergraduate section, had occurred under your tenure.

Chapin: Yes. When we made the addition to the building, it was in '63, I guess, or something. No, '68. Undergraduate collections were very, very popular at the time. Making a collection-because, you know, big collections, the students get lost in, and here was a collection, that, these are the things that you're going to be using, these are the things, an undergraduate collection. Had the research stacks closed. You had to be a graduate student to get in and so on. That lasted about a year, and I found out that that was dumb.

Charnley: Duplication.

Chapin: So I said, "Let's do away with that," and we went back to the total collection.

Charnley: The open stack.

Chapin: We had started off the library with divisional rooms, like science room, humanities room, social sciences.

Then we went to undergraduate, graduate, and then we just went to one big collection, you know, all the way through, with reference and so forth.

I've never had any problems with change. I like change. My staff used to kid me that, you know, every five years, "Come on, Dick, it's five years and we haven't changed anything." [Laughter]

Charnley: That's interesting. The student turmoil of the sixties, how did it affect you at the library?

Chapin: Oh, there was one time they had big-well, we started riots on campus. I remember one night, we were having a big riot. It was the Vietnam War. I came back over on campus and got a phone call that, "Shut the library down. Close the library." I picked up the phone and called Dick Burnitt, who I knew well, called him back, and I said, "Hey, Dick. I've got 2,000 kids in here and I'm not going to dump them out." [Laughter] So he said, "Okay, keep them."

At one time we had a confrontation of them checking out books just to get attention. I mean, it wasn't anti-library, it was anti, you know, anti the thing, and we worked that one out pretty well. One of my key staff members eventually was one of the leaders of the student revolution, a young lady by the name of Esther Pearl. So Beth was involved with these students, and after we got her on the staff, first as a student, and then later on as a clerical person, and later on as a librarian, she was very useful for us on this.

Charnley: Is she still at the library?

Chapin: No, no. She left. When I left, I thought she was going to get the job, but she didn't, and so she went to Rice and then she passed away. She had an unfortunate cancer problem.

Charnley: You mentioned Vietnam. Some of the biographical information indicates that you had a role in the Vietnam Project. How did you get involved in that?

Chapin: When I came, I thought I'd be here three years and then would take over, and Jackson Towne was going to stay another year, so then I said, "Okay, if he's going to stay another year, I'm leaving." Then, "Oh, don't leave. I want you to go out and visit our projects." Pakistan and [unclear] and Vietnam. That's the way I got involved with that. So I took three months and went around and looked at these projects.

Then when I came back, they made me director. I sort of thought that was their way of, you know, trying to buy me out, keep me around for a while. [Laughter]

Charnley: That's interesting. And MSU was expanding, certainly, in its international program at that time.

Chapin: Oh, yes, right. And then I later went down to Brazil and worked with the programs that they had down there. So being involved with the international programs. Not in the same way that Ralph Smuckler was, because that was his job, and one that he did very well. He and Glen Taggart.

Charnley: Was there any perspective that you gained from that, at least observing those programs in the field or participating in those? Anything that you gained from it?

Chapin: Gained from coming back here?

Charnley: When you came back, did your participation in that give you anything in terms of-

Chapin: No, no, no. Not at all. I mean, it helped me see part of the world that I hadn't seen, but as far as helped me in the library one way or the other, no, no way. Except for the fact that you made another group of

friends. This is very important to me that when I came here, that I would meet the people who were making decisions on campus. That first year, I tried to arrange a meeting with all the deans and department heads, to talk to them about what a library could do, and what ours is not doing and how we were going to make it work. So then I had this international connection going out, but by that time they had moved into the library. Their administrative offices were over in the library.

Charnley: Why don't we talk a little bit about the MSU presidents that you worked with. Obviously, quite a few. What were your earliest contacts with President Hannah? Your earliest contacts, remember any of those?

Chapin: Yes. Well, I think I got hired without meeting President Hannah. Then I met President Hannah after I came. After I became director, after a year or two, I said to the provost, I said, "Jake, why don't I ever talk to the president about library matters? I mean, I talk to him about other things, but I never talk to him about library matters."

And Jake said, "The president doesn't like to be in a room with anyone that knows more about the subject than he does, because he doesn't know anything about libraries and he knows you talk a lot. So he doesn't want to talk libraries with you."

And I said, "Okay, as long as he continues to support us, we'll not talk libraries with him." And he was very supportive, very supportive.

Charnley: And that relationship developed into a friendship throughout his life, with you?

Chapin: Well, no, not in terms of socially or having lunch with him.

Charnley: So it was more professional.

Chapin: Yes. Strictly professional. Now, the other presidents were a different matter. When Cliff [Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.] came, we had him over to the house for dinner early on. My wife and I had him over for dinner, and he talked to the Friends of the Library. Hannah would come and talk to Friends of the Library. He did that.

Charnley: So Dr. Wharton was a strong library supporter?

Chapin: Yes. Cliff was a good library supporter. And Ed [Edgar L.] Harden and Gordon Guyer and Walter [Adams]. Walter and I didn't really get along very well, but he was doing his job the way he thought he should do his job. And then when John came along, you know, I had really good relationships with all the presidents. I don't know when it was, I think it was during Cliff's time, I started going to the Council of Deans meetings, and I was there representing, in the same role as a dean and-

Charnley: As a director.

Chapin: -would be talking, planning, and so forth.

Charnley: The provosts that you had the opportunity to work with, any of those that-

Chapin: Well, we'll start with Paul Miller. He was number one. Paul was the very first and was a very good friend. I mean, not a good friend, but an acquaintance and one that I worked very well with. And then I think Jake Neville probably was next, and Jake and I knew each other from high school days.

Charnley: Oh, is that right?

Chapin: Well, Eleanor knew his wife, and when they were at Illinois, we would visit with them and so forth, and so this was a social relationship. When we came here, Jake had a house that he was trying to rent, and we rented his house from him for about four months, until we found our way. So Jake was very close. Larry [Lawrence] Boger, the same way. I had worked with Larry in Ag Econ and so forth and so, you know, we were friends. We played golf together and stuff like that.

Where do we go from that?

Charnley: Was it Clarence Winder?

Chapin: Oh, Winder, yes. Yes, Winder and I got along very well all the years.

Charnley: David Scott?

Chapin: Oh, David. Yes, yes, yes. David was-his wife was very friendly with us and so forth. So we knew these people. The provosts we knew socially as well as professionally. The presidents, basically, it was a professional operation, but we'd see them. And then I would see Hannah. Certainly I don't mean that in any way that Hannah, you know-I'm very fond of him.

Charnley: I understand. In your dealings with the board of trustees, I don't know if you had direct dealings or anything like that, but were there any trustees in particular that were supportive of your position or the library, that you recall? Or were they out of the picture, and did they take direct action?

Chapin: They wouldn't have direct action with me very much. A few of them, you know, I would have some contacts with. I was just looking through some of my old papers before I came over here to try to put these names back in my head, and there was an article clipped out of the paper that I had talked to the board of trustees, and the

headline was "Bookie Reports to Trustees." And that's the way I began my speech. I said, "Now, I can see the headlines coming. 'The Bookie Reports to the Board of Trustees.'" So I showed them slides, I had them laughing.

This is what the article was about, you know, how it was a laughing thing. And then after the meeting, they voted me money for the new medical library, that we never got built. Here we had it all planned and we had all the plans and so forth, and then my successor decided he didn't want this. That was really a bad mistake.

Charnley: Toward the end of your directorship, and I just recently looked at Dr. [Maurice] Hungiville's book on the MSU Press, and he quoted in there an ultimatum on a committee that you were on, and he said, "Fund it or fold it," regarding the press. How did you become director of the MSU Press?

Chapin: Well, the provost saw that report that said, "Fund it or fold it," and he said, "Okay, you can take it over, but we're not going to give you any more money. But it's your baby." [Laughter]

Charnley: So that was added to your regular duties?

Chapin: Yes. I think I had about five years left, and they just added that. Winder, it was interesting, I said, "I don't know anything about publishing or anything. I've been on the board of the press for a long time, but I know nothing about publishing." He said, "Well, it's like libraries. It's like books." [Laughter]

And so we went from there, and then when Lou Anna [Simon] became provost-well, she was assistant provost, and was supportive from the very beginning, and then when she took over.

Charnley: And you had some commercial successes with some of your books, that they got published?

Chapin: Had one big one. Max Dupree [phonetic] over in Holland.

Charnley: *The Steel Case?* No, no, not *Steel Case*. *Herman Miller*.

Chapin: *Herman Miller*. Max [unclear] *Herman Miller* and he had a book. He and I worked on that book and we had several long sessions, but some of it got real religious. He said, "Now, Dick, I know you're not going to like this chapter." [Laughter] But we worked it out and got the book published. I forget who it was, but one of the big publishing houses bought us out for \$150,000. I had a budget for the press of about \$25,000 now. For \$150,000, I'm only going to be there for three more years. I said, "That's it." So we had got one real big success, real big success. I mean, enough to keep the press going. I think that the press likely would have folded if it hadn't had an access.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Charnley: Okay, we're starting again and we're talking about the MSU Press and Dr. Chapin's role in it, and bringing to publication Max Dupree's book. So you were saying, I asked the question about-

Chapin: One of our friends who went over there and was working with Max was one of our sociology staff members. I'll think of his name in a minute. Foss? I think Foss. And he was working with Max and brought me the manuscript, and so then I started meeting with Max, you know, looked at the manuscript, started meeting with Max and fixed it up to make it something that we could really publish. His book I edited. That's the only one I edited. We had a very small staff. We had Laurie Lancor [phonetic], who was a secretary to me, and that was it for a while, and then we hired Julie Loehr as an editor, and that was the three of us, that was the press.

Charnley: That was the press. And you worked with-

Chapin: And I was working in the library in the meantime.

Charnley: In addition to that.

Chapin: I would usually spend my mornings over in the library and the afternoons over at the press.

Charnley: In terms of anything else about the press, were you involved with the hiring of the current director?

Chapin: Of Fred? Well, I talked to him, you know, but no, that, you know, I didn't want to be in on that, because I was going to be gone and so forth. But the committee we had had picked him out and I talked to him and so forth, but I didn't select him out of the whole bundle.

Charnley: The community activities that you've been involved in, in the East Lansing area or within Michigan, could you talk a little bit about some of those?

Chapin: Let's see. I guess the first thing was, in the early sixties or maybe it was the fifties, sixties or fifties, they had a Human Relations Commission in East Lansing, and this is a problem. You know, we had a law that no blacks could have a house in East Lansing. Bob Green was on the committee, and, you know, Bob was one of our active black faculty members, and he left to go to Martin Luther King's [Jr.] program. He was going to part of it, so he took leave, and then they appointed me to serve on the Human Relations Commission in Bob's stead. And so that I did, and that was a very interesting experience, very much so.

One of the people I met there was Wally Robinson, who was with the People's Church, and Wally and I became very close friends and worked very closely on the human relations stuff together.

Charnley: So you saw some change in East Lansing.

Chapin: Oh, yes. There were changes immediately. Hannah was supporting us, getting rid of that law and so forth, and so we got the laws changed on this thing, and anyone could come in and buy a house. So that, I thought, was a very successful thing.

Talk about student confrontations, when the war was going on and the students were protesting, they had a little protest over at the high school, and I met with the students and the parents. You know, we had the big meeting, and I'm saying to the parents, "Now, listen, just relax. These kids are thinking on their own." The kids applauded, and I said, "Now, just a minute. I'm going to get to you in a minute." [Laughter] So from that meeting on, several people were trying to push me for Board of Education, and so I've served on the Board of Education then for five years, served as president for one year.

Charnley: In the early seventies?

Chapin: Yes.

Charnley: And you were president of the board?

Chapin: President of the board in '74, I think it was, yes.

Charnley: While you were on the board in East Lansing, were there any major changes that went on, or any developments in the school?

Chapin: We had a good superintendent at that time, Malcolm Katz, but we did make some changes. I remember one time, the legislature had a piece of legislation out that said that the school board should not have busing, or something like that. The school board should not bus students. I forget exactly what it was, but it was a racial

thing, of bringing together people from different communities. I had a resolution saying let's oppose this, because we should decide what we're doing, we shouldn't have the legislature decide if we can do this or not. That's all.

Went to a big meeting. They had to call a public meeting, it was in the auditorium, and I was shocked at how many people were there. And all of them said, "No busing, no busing." I walked in. When my wife would sit down with someone, they'd take off their pin. I had a lot of friends who were no longer friends after that confrontation, but we didn't have very many sticky confrontations like that. You know, we worked pretty well together. I had a hard time getting anyone on the board to second any of my motions. [Laughter]

Charnley: Were there any foundations or community groups that you worked with in terms of some of the outreach that you had done, that you did personally? Not so much on library, but any other foundations or boards that you were on.

Chapin: Well, the library stuff. I mean, I was president of the Michigan Library Association and so forth. We got a lot of money from—we got money, like, to redo our catalog and all that, from Kellogg [Foundation], and we were pretty successful at getting some grants.

Charnley: Were you involved in the grantwriting or did you have some staff do that?

Chapin: No, I would usually do this. I would usually do this. And then the association, the library association I was active in the development of the Ohio College Library Center and some of these places, so I got involved with that one.

We had a confrontation going here between University of Michigan and us. There were two different groups. There was a research library group and there was the Ohio College Library Center. Which group would we join? We were on basically the same thing, shared database.

Charnley: Right. OCLC?

Chapin: Yes. And my attitude was that we should go with OCLC and share our database with the public libraries and the Michigan was, well, let's just share with the other rich libraries. So this was very much the research libraries, and we went over here and stayed with this group. That paid off in the long run. That paid off in the long run, because those are the ones that needed it, you know. These people then came over and joined.

Charnley: And so what year did you retire?

Chapin: '89. I mean, I didn't actually-I was on the payroll till '90. In '89, I was on my final terminal leave. [M.] Cecil Mackey conned me into going to UAE, and I went over there and helped them with some libraries.

Charnley: In setting up libraries?

Chapin: Well, they had a library, but getting it operating right. They had a university that had an inadequate library, sort of like ours was when I came here. And so I went out, and I went out, I guess, maybe seven or eight times, and would spend two or three weeks and help them on that. And now they've got another program going that Cecil's trying to get me to go with.

When we were talking about presidents, we didn't mention Cecil.

Charnley: We didn't. You're right. We shouldn't forget him. He's still a presence on campus. And so your relationship with him was good, also?

Chapin: Oh, yes, yes. He and I played tennis together. I played golf with Boger. I've played tennis with Cecil.

Charnley: So in terms of leadership style, the importance of the personal relationship was, you could call him up and-

Chapin: I could call him up and say, "Hey, I don't agree with this," which I often did. I would never hesitate to tell people I didn't agree with them on some things.

Charnley: Have you been active since your retirement in other MSU affairs or programs, or some guest speakers, or anything like that since your retirement?

Chapin: I'm on the Sesquicentennial Committee, but this is really slow getting going. I mean, we're really, we're a little bit slow getting that thing up and going, but we're getting there. We're getting there. We talked about the centennial year being five years from now, and I guess what I'm going to try to push with the committee is that the centennial will start next February. Next February, we have this commission, and the music department has a commissioned symphony that someone's writing especially to describe the campus in music. And I said, "Let's have that and then let's have other things for the next four or five years that show the depth of the university." We'll send the museums out for exhibits at other places, and send the symphony orchestra over to Detroit to play the symphony. Not just have it here, but reach out. And so I think that will go on longer than five years, if I'm here.

Charnley: That's a good idea. Were there any other ideas that you were interested in, in terms of promoting the sesquicentennial, that you thought of personally?

Chapin: No, but one time I was doing a fundraiser for the library, trying to do a fundraiser for the library, so I wrote to all the alums, and said, "Why don't you send me those things that you remember that really made a change on this campus, things that really made a change on this campus. Let me know what there are." I gave them my

favorite. My favorite was when Gordon Sabine convinced Hannah that we could recruit students as well as quarterbacks, and we went out after students and this is when we got all the National Merit [Scholarship] finalists and so forth, and then we got the Honors College and so forth, and it just changed the student body, for us who were here, it changed the student body in two years. I mean, you could just tell the difference.

Charnley: You saw the difference.

Chapin: Yes, and you can see the difference in the library, you can see the difference every place. There were more intellectual activities going on, on campus, and everything, you know. And just getting these bright kids, because then, if they're going to Michigan State, well, I'm an A student, I want to go, too. And then the B students will come. So we've really changed the student body, and that, to me, was important. Some people thought the medical schools were very important, and different. But I got very, very, very little response from this. I got very little. I was sort of disappointed on how little response I got on this request for information, like what are the changing things? In your time, what are the changing things?

Charnley: Changes within the College of Arts and Letters. I started as a student of Fred Williams in '78, is when I came here, so I've had some contact with the university since then. Even a lot of changes since then. Are there any people that you can think of that are present today that might be good additions for the oral history project?

Chapin: One thing that I think someone, if they haven't already done it, I think maybe it's already been done, but you've got to get Gordon Sabine.

Charnley: Gordon Sabine.

Chapin: Yes. Gordon was the one who really changed the student body around, got Downer's College [phonetic] started. He came as dean of communications and then Hannah pulled him out of that, had him as his special assistant. But certainly he's one that you want to talk to.

I don't know, you'd better talk to all the old deans and so forth, you know, like Dick Brylum, who's in natural science, and Dick was in the provost's office for some time before I went over there, would be a good person to talk to. I'm sure I could sit down and give you a number of them.

Charnley: Now you're reflecting back on your tenure here at Michigan State. Any capstone or any item that you want to leave us with in terms of how you see this university?

Chapin: How I see this university? I see this university as a-well, I'm going to be personal about it. Personally, this is a great place for me because I like to live there and I like the school, I like the people, and I like this. And I think that the university's reach-out program, I mean their outreach program, to bring people in from different backgrounds and different experiences is very good. I don't think I would like to go to a place like Harvard or Yale, where they were all cut out of the same mold. I like this.

When we were having the Distinguished Alumni Awards, I guess, and this is the bright students that come in, you know, and take a test, and we have a dinner, and I talked to them once. So I'm talking to these, you know, it must be 750 kids over at Kellogg, and I begin by saying, "You know, I'm probably the dumbest one in the room."

[Laughter] And it was sort of frightening, but exciting to have this change. I mean, all these bright kids are around.

And then I think the development of our programs. We've never been hesitant to go off with new programs. New programs, and new ways of doing things. I like that. I like change. There's nothing wrong with tradition, but you've always got people looking to see, "Is this the best way at this time?"

Charnley: Your relationship with President [M. Peter] McPherson, have you had any contact with him?

Chapin: I've had some contacts with him. You know, he invites the distinguished faculty people over for a party once a year, and so I go to that, and he's there. I've seen him a few other times, but not much, not much. I haven't had that much contact with him.

Charnley: Any last words you have on the library or anything that I've forgotten, points you wanted to make?

Chapin: Anything you've forgotten. Anything I've forgotten. All I can say is that I just have had a great staff. I had a great staff of people working with me, and we were willing to change and we did change. We adapted to the new student body, we adapted to the new programs that were coming in. And certainly I couldn't have done it by myself. We had good people to do this.

I had very good support, always, from the deans, from the department chairs, and so forth. Go back to when I first started, you know, I'd sit down with Paul Bagwell and say, "Okay, now this is the way we teach kids." ATL is where we teach kids how to use the library, because you always had a paper at that time, that the kids had to turn in.

Charnley: We still do.

Chapin: And that's the way they learn how to use the library, and that was very important to us. And so I tried to keep this going, so that he could see how important it was. You know, you couldn't let me off. Because if you stopped that, we had to find some other way of doing things. I think there are probably lots of things I would like to say, but too much.

Charnley: I have appreciated the time that you've given me and appreciate your insights about Michigan State University and your career. Thank you very much.

Chapin: Thank you.

[End of interview]

Index

- Adams, Walter 5, 15
- Automation 8, 9

- Bagwell, Paul 27
- Baker, Ronald 7
- Board of Trustees 17
- Boger, Lawrence 16, 24
- Brylum, Dick 26
- Burnitt, Dick 12

- Campus atmosphere in the 1960s 12
- Central Library vs. Distributed Library System 11
- Combs, William H. 7
- Crane, Maury 10

- Downer's College 26
- Dupree, Max 18, 19

- Florida State University 1
- Friends of the Library 15

- Green, Bob 20
- Guyer, Gordon 15

- Hannah, John A. 3, 5-7, 14, 15, 17, 21, 26
- Harden, Edgar L. 15
- Hikock, Florence 8
- Human Relations Commission 20

- IBM Management School 9
- International Programs 14

- Kabalin, Mladen 8
- Katz, Malcolm 21
- Kellogg Foundation 22
- Koch, Henry 8

- Lancor, Laurie 19
- Library 2-7, 12, 25
- Loehr, Julie 19

- Mackey, M. Cecil 23
- McMillan, Carol 8
- McPherson, M. Peter 27
- Michigan Library Association 22
- Microfilm 9
- Miller, Paul 16

MSU Press 18, 19

National Agricultural Library 8

National Gallery of the Spoken Word 11

Neville, Jake 16

Ohio College Library Center 22

Online Access 10

Pearl, Esther 13

Racial Discrimination 20-22

Robinson, Wally 20

Sabine, Gordon 25, 26

Schuller, Charles F. 7

Scott, David 17

Sesquicentennial Committee 24

Simon, Lou Anna 18

Smuckler, Ralph 14

Stoddard, Bill 8

Taggert, Glen 14

Towne, Jackson E. 2, 13

Undergraduate Collection 11

University of Michigan 8, 22

University Services 7

Vietnam Project 13

Vincent Voice Library 10

Wabash College 1

Wharton, Clifton R., Jr. 15

Williams, Fred 25

Winder, Clarence 16, 18