University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives

Interviewees: Jim Dengate and Wayne Pitard

Interviewers: Joseph Baronovic and Vaughn Fenton

Length: 02:01:02

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Vaughn Fenton: I'll start recording here. So what we were looking to do is just ask some follow up questions. I think we have fewer questions than last time, but again, we're not on a time frame. We're not on a map or anything like that, so this can go in whatever way we want it to go. Are there any questions you guys have before we start?

Jim Dengate: Not for me so.

VF: OK, in terms of trying to get into the Spurlock and everything I've been talking to Christa Deacy-Quinn and we were talking about trying to make it work with COVID and everything. And Joe and I are going to do some tests before we see about getting you guys in there and see how audio will work, and especially how it will work with regards to being masked. So those are our worries right now, and if it doesn't end up working that way then we'll just have to consider either putting it off or doing something else instead. And we also don't want to take up all of you guys's time.

Wayne Pitard: Well yes, my schedule is so busy. You know, actually now we're on the series Bosch, and we have now committed to a series that has 60 45 minute episodes.

VF: Well, that's going to be a filled up schedule.

WP: So, yeah, I don't know if we'll have time to do very much. We'll try to fit things in.

VF: Yeah, well, if that's gotta take precedence over anything we're doing, you just let us know.

WP: Yeah, well. It's the most important thing here.

JB: Yeah, it's important to stay busy.

VF: So why don't we begin then. We've got a couple questions here about elaborating on the early museum. And it's OK… we know that you guys don't have all the answers, of course, but the 1st place to start is pretty far back: do you have any idea where President Gregory's original collection of objects came from for the Spurlock or for the museums in general?

WP: I can tell you that President Gregory raised private funds. He raised about $2000 by delivering lectures, because the board of trustees didn't have any money for frivolous things like art. And he raised about $2000, added $1500 of his own—which was about 1/4 of his salary

annual salary, which is pretty significant—and went off to Europe and picked up most of the stuff in at the Louvre. Little bit elsewhere, but mostly the statuary was at the Louvre. The Louvre had a huge plaster cast business at the time, and so I'm pretty sure all the ones that the Spurlock now has came from the Louvre. The Louvre's plaster cast factory. He had originally planned to get 15 full size plaster casts. And then right toward the end of his time, they brought him down to the plaster studio and showed him the Laocoön—that is the one that you first see when you go in the classical gallery now—and he said: "I have to have that." So he wrote a letter back to the President… er, not the President of the university... somebody at the university, saying: "I can get this and have it shipped for $200. Is there anyone who would give us $200 to do so?" And instead, one of the student body classes raised the money, and they wrote back and said: "Go ahead and order it. You'll have the money." and so they did. And so we've got 16 full sized plaster casts. And then the museum—his museum—included about 40 smaller plaster casts. It included medallions and reliefs—we have some of his reliefs. It had busts of famous people. And the museum now has all known busts from the Gregory Collection. For a very long time the Classics department had a large number of the Classical people busts. They were in the Classics library, but when they moved from the 4th floor down to the second floor, they very generously gave us the original Gregory ones and kept the ones that were not from the Gregory collection, so I believe that the Spurlock now has all known sculpture casts that we're aware of at the university that survived from Gregory's collection.

JD: There's a volume on… our guide to the university, by Muriel Scheinman[1], 1995, that has a photograph— if I can get it very close to the camera[2]—of the Gregory Collection in University Hall, so that is something to at least put a footnote on, Muriel Scheinman, a guide to art at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign—or just the University of Illinois will do—and it's on page 4.

VF: Oh wow, yeah.

JD: And this photograph was taken, apparently, in 1878, according to the book.

WP: Yeah, the museum opened on New Year's Day, 1875, and it was the largest Art Museum West of the Allegheny Mountains. When it opened, it opened four years before the Art Institute in Chicago. And it had a startling impact on Illinois. Across the state, people were astonished. The walls were painted maroon, so the white statues on the backing of the maroon walls was apparently quite surprising and powerful. And, it clearly broke down a lot of the antipathy against the university having art collections as well and teaching the Fine Arts and Humanities. It was a major turning point in this because people who had opposed this came to the museum and they were just stunned by what they saw, and they loved it.

Joe Baronovic: And the university was originally supposed to be a trade school, right?

WP: It was essentially to be a trade school for agriculture and engineering. They did not want research going on, they just wanted people to teach. The state legislature, or the governor and

[1] Scheinman, Muriel. 1995. *A Guide to Art at the University of Illinois*. University of Illinois Press: Chicago, IL.

[2] Prof. Dengate here tries to show the picture in his book to the camera.

some of the board members, those people made a terrible mistake in hiring John Milton Gregory, who came in his first meeting and said this is going to be a comprehensive university and we're going to have the pure Sciences. We're going to have Humanities. We're going to have Fine Arts. And that's what he fought for. And he had to fight tooth and nail from 1867 to about 1875, 1876. But by the time he retired, in 1880, he had won and nobody thought that the university should just be a glorified trade school for agriculture and engineering. So he is the first of three absolutely key presidents in the university that made the university one of the top universities in the country, when by all rights we should be a second tier, maybe third tier university.

VF: Wonderful, yeah, that's really nice to know. Due to that, that's where we are right now with Joe and I being graduate students.

WP: That's right, yeah, right yeah, yeah.

JB: Would not be here otherwise.

WP: Yeah, the second really influential president was Edmund James. 1904 to 1920. And he is the one that really turned us into a graduate research university. But he was very much aware of the fact that John Milton Gregory made his situation possible. So he is the one that put the big stone on John Milton Gregory's grave there on the quad. With the inscription that says: “if you seek his monument, look about you.” James really understood the importance of Gregory in all of this, and so that tombstone is actually a really important connector between the two really, really important presidents of the 1st 50 years.

VF: Interesting. I guess sticking on the topic, we can move a little bit further on in time, and perhaps you don't know too much about this, but in your timeline, Wayne, you brought up a couple of things about depression era and the theft in 1929 of some gold coins, and we're wondering if you can elaborate a little bit, number one, on the effects of the Great Depression, and then we can get to this little point about just general theft about, or with, the museum.

WP: Yeah, this may be something that Jim knows a lot about.

VF: By all means.

JD: Yeah, yeah, the depression saw the museum in effect closed, although it remained open under the Classics Department and the History Department. Basically, the Classics department ran it because they were on the third floor of Lincoln Hall and simply unlocked the doors every day and let anyone wander in and around who wanted to in the collection. They had some of the coin collection on display, in a series—I saw these old things before they were discarded. They were things that we used to have in the library too, where they would have little slots for each journal that we had in the Classics library, in the old days, so you could find out which journal was there or in the stacks, or in the other libraries on campus. But each little area had a coin in it, but you could just hit the outside of this metal rack with these acetate coin holders and sometimes the coin could come out just like a slot machine, and so that's one of the places where the coin collection disappeared. Another one where it may have disappeared, or certainly lost

coins—or didn't gain much—was that Oscar Dodson used to take the collection in a box to coin shows at Lincoln Square and would trade with people. And while he was apparently a fairly good dealer from his reputation, it may well be that some of the coins got shortchanged in that process or stolen since it was just a box of coins, and at that time the coins got taken out of their envelopes. They had envelopes with their original provenance: what collection they came from. And I'm still hopeful that some of the Greek coin collection which hasn't been studied in terms of its provenance, that the museum still retains those old coin envelopes. They did make it over from the World Heritage Museum, 4th floor, Lincoln Hall, to the Spurlock. And I hope that they're still somewhere around the Spurlock, so that whenever anyone studies that they can put back at least some of the coins. We did a lot with the Roman coins and got most of them back in their places. If you look at the master's theses of the three master's theses on the Roman coin collection, they were able to get a great many of the coins back, so actually only a few end up, or more than a few, but some end up unprovenanced. Otherwise, we know the collection they came from.

Another disaster, so to speak, with the old coin number or numbering that tricked Wayne when he first encountered it, was the fact that when Georgette van Buitenen—Georgette Meredith van Buitenen first devised the records system from the old Classical museum and other museum—the European Museum collection and Oriental Museum collection inventory—she established the system that they use at the Metropolitan Museum of a tripartite number of year of acquisition, collection— agent collection—number and then each object in the collection given a separate serial number, so each has three numbers. Unfortunately, when Barbara Bohen was in charge for some obscure reason, when it was going to be computerized, the obscure reason I've never figured out, Georgette chose "XX" For those of unknown provenance. And the reason so much was "XX" and still is today is that everything had a little plaque or card—mostly it was paper cards—when it was on display in the original museum with its Classical Museum or European Museum or Oriental Museum number, and the objects right nearby Oscar[3] would move them around and sometimes discard the papers, or sometimes just save them so some were missing, some were gone. But you didn't know what object the numbers on the card stood for, except for a basic title of coins or something like that—Roman coins or Greek coins—so that it was difficult and that's why so many objects became XX. Because they weren't known since Oscar had moved them around, but without keeping records. But then Barbara Bohen gave the XXs all for computerization purposes 1900, and that's where Wayne slipped up. If you don't know that fact, that it's just all the unknown provenances, you think the museum has a huge collection.

WP: Fantastic year!

JD: …They just got everything then!

VF: I believe I've even looked at the coin collections and had that very same thought before.

WP: Yeah. One of the things that the registration department has been trying to do is they've been trying to connect up artifacts that are the 1900 series with data that they have, to try to

[3] Oscar Dodson.

move them out. We have I've been working with the cylinder seals—the Mesopotamian cylinder seals—and through a number of things that we have found, we've been able to determine that they were bought in 1919. 1919 to 1921. And so we're going to be taking out the ones that we know were bought in one big bunch. Between 1919-1921, they came into the collection all in 1919, and they paid on the installment plan for three years. But we have 90/93 seals. And 85 of them come from that original collection and then the others we don't know where they came from, but they came from later, sometime after. The 1920s, apparently. And but we were able to move that big section out of 1900 and put it in a year that reflects when they came to the university, and to the museum. And yeah, it's just this huge collection of stuff. It is a sad reflection on the quality of some people who were in charge at various times, that the connection between the information that was there on the original cards in the museum, that that stuff got lost. And yeah, I think a lot of it is never going to be recoverable.

VF: Sure, that's unfortunate. Along the lines, since we're talking about him already, Oscar Dodson. Do we have any idea of how many coins he traded out or if it was a lot, or only a few of them?

JD: We have no real idea. He just, when they would have an annual coin collectors Lincoln Square trading fest, and he would sit at a booth with his coins as well as the World Heritage Museum coins and how much got traded, and how much he traded up or down, we don't know. The only sort-of-way of keeping track is that we have most of the Roman collection that we know of, that we were able to get it put back to its original collection. So in that sense, if that can be used as a model, we didn't lose that much in the trading. But we don't know how much, what he was aimed at in trading for, and what he got and what he traded. So, there's no records of that.

VF: Right.

JD: Yeah, it's not much.

WP: The other story that I was told by Barbara Bohen was that shortly after she became a director of the museum, in the early 80s, a fellow from—I think it was the National Endowment for the Humanities—came to visit her and brought with him three cuneiform tablets—ancient Mesopotamia and cuneiform tablets—which he said that he wanted to return to the museum. Because several years before Oscar Dodson had brought them to a number of people there and given them as gifts, presumably to try to influence their kindness toward the museum, and they always felt bad about it and they finally had an opportunity to return them. So he does seem to have thought of the collection somewhat personally. There is one cylinder seal, a lovely cylinder seal for which we have an impression, and it's just a beautiful cylinder seal, that is no longer in the collection and was not there when Georgette started the new system. It never developed a number, so that means that it disappeared sometime between 1948 when we know the collection was in the possession of Edith Porada[4] at Columbia University. She's the one that actually presented us with this amazing description of each of the seals she had it and presented it. We have the information that when she returned the seals they were all back. So sometime

[4] Edith Porada: Professor at Columbia University, 1958-1984.

after 1948 and sometime before 1974, that seal disappeared. With the appearance of those cuneiform tablets, my suspicion has fallen upon Oscar as possibly having given it as a gift somewhere along the line too.

VF: That seems to be an unfortunate typicality.

JD: The other thing he is said to have done—although I wasn't here when he did it—was to raise money for acquisitions by letting people bid as a kind of auction for various objects. So then he would use the money he obtained, giving the person the object and then using that to go make acquisitions for what became the World Heritage Museum by taking trips around the world, and as many have said to me, going into gift shops at airports and buying things. Some of the stuff that he acquired is very good and was not airports, so it's not entirely so and as kind of confirmation of that, Barbara Bohen, when she first arrived here and was looking for things for her house, went to garage sales one Sunday and discovered a bunch of objects—not a huge number—Greek and Roman that she saw right away and then on the bottom she saw the CM [Classical Museum] numbers and so she did buy those and got them back to the museum. So that kind of confirms using the objects as a way to raise funds for acquisitions.

WP: That then could be where the cylinder seal went.

JD: Right, that's probably one of its… Yeah, and it hasn't turned up at a garage sale that anyone who knew what it was…

WP: And it's a beautiful little seal and it's just a shame that all we have is the impression. At least we have the impression.

JD: Did you put it on the Interpol missing object list or anything?

WP: Yeah, we have not. It certainly wouldn't hurt perhaps to do so.

JD: 'Cause that's something that's distinctive enough if it's in another museum or collection…

WP: Yeah, it's actually got a an inscription on it.

JD: Ah, making it work.

WP: Yeah, it's a very distinctive seal in that way. Yeah, maybe we should do that. I'll try to mention that to Jennifer and see if they want to try to do that.

VF: Yeah, I mean any way we can get any of these things back is obviously worth it.

JB: It's strange, those stories I find very amusing when you re-discover the object in a garage sale. But then if in another 100 years we still haven't found it, it's going to make me very sad.

WP: Yeah, who knows how much was lost that way.

VF: Every time I hear one of these stories from you guys, another chip of my heart just falls off.

JD: The only thing to hope for is that at least these were not the most important objects, although that seal unfortunately sounds like one.

WP: It was a very nice seal. You know it would have been one of the ones that we would have had out on display.

JD: And that may be some of the coins too. The other trick that coin dealers do when they are interested in something in a collection is have something that's a near/close example, but it's not nearly as fine or as valuable, and will switch it in. And that has happened to a number of coin collections around the world where visitors have come and then traded the good thing for the bad. The only thing is if the museum has records, that can be caught later when that coin turns up at auction. But it's rarely caught, so yeah.

JB: Well Vaughn, I hate to chip off more of your heart but we do have questions about the casts that got destroyed. So the collection of plaster casts, some of them were destroyed as plaster casts fell out of favor in museums. We have a couple of follow up questions about that. Do we know, for example, what casts were lost? Were they casts of famous busts or artworks? Particulars?

WP: Yeah, we do know which ones were lost because a catalog of John Milton Gregory's collection was published—everything in the museum. And so we know which four we have, in terms of the 16 full sized casts. Some of them had been accidentally broken when—it was 1897—they needed the big museum space in University Hall for classrooms, so they moved the museum. Supposedly moved it. They actually just largely stored it down to the basement of the brand new library, which was all built. And so for a decade it sat down there. And when Edmund James came along, he thought particularly the large casts ought to be on display, and so he arranged for them to be set in the new auditorium in 1908. And in the Lincoln Hall and a few other places. And one in the library: Altgeld.[5] The Artemis of Gabii that we have in the classical gallery actually spent much of its time in Altgeld's library before the library shifted away. Anyway, there is an inventory list from 1907 that shows where everything… they just removed everything actually from the basement of Altgeld and it tells you where everything went. And so several of the statues went to public places. Some of the statues, and the smaller ones, went to the art department. So you can actually look at that inventory and see where everything went, but it talks about how a couple of the of the pieces had already been broken. And they were simply stored in a closet in the new auditorium, at that point. Then eventually, by about 1930, several of the ones that were in the auditorium were moved to Temple Buell Gallery in the Architecture building which became the Hall of Casts for the art department, which allowed people to learn how to draw the human body from statues. And so there are pictures from 1932, I think, and 1938, of the Hall of casts, and in the first picture you can see a whole bunch of the Gregory pieces in there, including the Laocoön, and the Polyhymnia, and all the ones that we have except

[5] Altgeld Hall, constructed in 1897 and named after governor John Peter Altgeld.

for the Artemis of Gabii. You can see them in that picture in 1932. And then things got changed around when Lorado Taft died. And his wife partially gave and partially sold his plaster casts of famous works of art, and his own—plaster casts of his own works—to the university in 1936/37. And that was a couple hundred or more and they didn't have any room for them. They put some of them in the Temple Buell Gallery and the Architecture building, including the one that is still in there. The…

JD: Ghiberti Doors[6].

WP: …yes, the Ghiberti doors are… that's just spectacular there. And that's from his collection. And so they move things around and some of Gregory's pieces disappear. They're not there in 1938, 'cause a lot of the Lorado Taft stuff is now in there. But after World War II, about 1948, the art department started using live models for people to learn how to how to draw people and the hall of casts disappears. And that is when our Classics graduate student, Alexander Schulz, jumped in and asked the Dean of FAA if he could take some of the statues from there before they were moved out and taken to the museum. And that's where we got the Laocoön and the Polyhymnia and the dying…

JD: Dying Gaul?

WP: …yeah, all these names and my brain is turned to mush!

JB: I think I know what you're talking about, but I don't remember either!

WP: Oh, the Amazon! It's the Amazon.

JD: Oh yeah, because I think The Dying Gaul was broken.

WP: Yeah, yeah, that's right. So those four are the big ones that we've got that we know are part of the original sixteen. There is possibly—and I don't know if the museum has gone and gotten them—but there are three statues—three plaster casts—in a warehouse down the southern part of Lincoln, off of Lincoln.

JD: It was on 1st Street, but they may have moved it…

WP: …It is 1st St, yeah, maybe it is.

JD: …way down and there's one Augustus and I can't remember the others. Well, one's a duplicate of Venus de Milo.

WP: Yeah, and I think that that's actually… the Venus de Milo I think is the Gregory one. What we heard was that it was vandalized while it was in the auditorium. And this one is missing its arm and is in pretty bad shape and so I know that the one that we have is from the Taft collection—the one that's actually in the museum. So I think this is possibly Gregory's. But we

[6] More commonly known as the Gates of Paradise, by Lorenzo Ghiberti. Originals in Florence, Italy.

can't follow the chain of custody the way that we can with the four pieces we've got. But I really would love to get that other Augustus, 'cause that is…

JD: I've always wanted to get him in too.

WP: …yeah, and he's in remarkably good shape.

JD: Yes, and I can't remember the third one.

WP: It's a mother and child. Maybe it's a medieval… a Madonna and child perhaps? I forgot and I knew what it was at one time. And it's lovely too. And I got down there the last year I was there. And then the fella who was in charge of that—the big guy—who was in charge of statuary in the university, got sick, and was out for several months and we didn't get the statues moved and then I retired and so I don't know if they have brought those, but I do suspect that that Venus de Milo, which is in terrible shape, is the Gregory one. That would be nice for us to have it. I don't know if there's any records of where it came from, whether the group in charge of the sculptures on campus on the art installations on campus has any records of that or not. But it'd be worth maybe trying to track down and see.

JD: And the Augustus is not a duplicate of the Prima Porta Augustus. It's the Augustus in toga that's in the Louvre, and it makes the perfect balance: Augustus, as a leader in war, bringing peace, and Augustus as a leader of religion, settling Rome and establishing peace in that way.

WP: Yeah, yeah, it's a. beautiful piece and it was in strikingly good condition.

JD: When I saw it even before you did, it was too.

WP: Yeah, so those need to be brought to the museum if they haven't brought them to the museum. Yeah, but you are right about the fact that after the hall of casts came to an end, and there was a problem with all these casts that Lorado Taft had collected that they didn't want anymore, and so my understanding is that at least in the 60s that the ritual for a PhD graduating in art history and maybe some other fields was allowed to take a sledge hammer and smash a plaster cast. And so they all pretty much disappeared, and I know from the mid 50s there's a letter—I think it's from the 50s—there's a letter from the Dean of FAA, who said that—maybe it was from the 40s—who wrote to the Dean—to the chancellor, maybe, or the President maybe, wasn't a chancellor at the time—saying that they had put a huge number of Lorado Taft's plaster casts under the seats at Memorial Stadium, and that they were close to being irreparable. And that if they were going to do anything about them, they had to do something quickly. And as far as I know they did nothing quickly about it and so all of those that were kept there were lost. Our graduate student found his collection of Egyptian plaster casts that Taft had bought off of the Egyptian government, who had made the casts for the Century of Progress World's Fair[7] in 1933 in Chicago. And they're excellent casts. He saw those down in the basement of Lincoln Hall and asked for permission to bring some of those up. He was trying to be very deliberate about which ones he chose, and such, and didn't save them all, but he saved a huge number of them. And

[7] Not to be confused with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

those are there. And then it's not until the 80s that people began to realize that plaster casts are actually… can be very valuable. And so everything has turned around since then.

VF: In terms of Taft, since we're on his subject now, did he have any other interaction that you know of with the ancient collection other than the casts?

WP: I don't know of anything because the casts actually are connected… well, there are two things. One is that the Laocoön is the statue that was damaged when it came over from Paris in 1874, and 14-year-old Lorado was put to work, putting it back together and that's what got him interested in sculpture. There's that connection. And I don't know whether he really did anything during his life connected to the museums there. And then of course parts of his collection came in largely because of our great graduate student, Alexander Schulz. You know anything more about that, Jim?

JD: No, except that you can see that there's a classical model behind a lot of his statues—bronze statues—in Chicago area…

VF: Right. That's why we were wondering…

JD: …and that's why he had that cast collection of his own—a huge cast collection in Chicago—and that came here but was mistreated. In the story I received from—and I'm now having trouble getting his name—the man who made the paper sculptures here, if you can think of his name…

WP: Oh, Frank Gallo.

JD: …Frank Gallo. The story I had was that when the—and I don't know if it's a repeated story of his or if you were present when—the person—Dean, oh, another name I'm not getting—of Fine Arts who established the Krannert Art Museum, that when they were getting the Krannert Art Museum together they had a wine and cheese party and took sledgehammers to what casts were available at the time. The casts that had originally been used for sketching and so on.

WP: And so that would have been the way that most of the John Milton Gregory original collection…

JD: Disappeared, right?

WP: …yeah, yeah, that's just so sad.

JD: And that was early 60s, yeah?

VF: Right.

WP: That's right in the area of the least interest in plaster casts.

JD: And oh, the Dean wrote the biography of Lorado Taft, the one whose his name is escaping me at the moment. Although I do know his name.

WP: Oh, he was... oh Allen, was it Allen? Maybe not.

JD: That's not it. Yeah, it'll come later, I hope.

WP: Yeh, I don't know I probably have that volume.

JD: Muriel, was published before he wrote the book but she may have him in here. I don't see it at the… Weller! Allen Weller.[8]

WP: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I had the Allen part, couldn't remember whether it's his first or last name.

JD: Yeah, you had the Allen right, but it's Weller. I was working for the last name and so Allen escaped me but there it is, Allen Weller.

WP: Yeah well, isn't that ironic. Taft loved the plaster casts and had this idea of a dream museum that he almost got the building, that is, the Museum of Science and Industry. He was in competition with the Museum of Science and Industry to be given that building, and he was going to do a universal development of sculpture from most ancient times to modern times in the museum, there, but of course, the only way you could do that was to do it through plaster casts, because you couldn't gather all of those great pieces. And so that's what he was doing with his collection. He was gathering stuff for that museum when he died. But it was also too late, because by the 1930s, he was having a hard time keeping the plaster cast—I think he maybe lost the battle at the Art Institute where he taught; they had already taken plaster casts out of their collection, and such. For him, he developed the idea too late to be able to do it.

VF: Right.

WP: He tried all the way up until he died to do it.

VF: I mean he is responsible, for at least some of the casts that we have—a good deal of them—so at least that's good.

WP: That's right. His collection has largely survived in the Spurlock, and well, actually, Krannert has his plaster casts of his own works and such. And of course, you've got things in the library. The pioneer statue in the main library, and some others. And of course the Alma Mater and such, so he's pretty well represented around. But his dream Museum is most fully established in the Spurlock at this point.

JD: And it's just a miracle in a sense that they survived as much as they did—both the Gregory Collection and his collection—by mere chance here, but it's become now one of the reasons that we're on the map in the country, because so few places have such large collections.

[8] Allen S. Weller: Chair of Art Department, 1948-1954; Dean of College of Fine and Applied Arts, 1954-1971; Director of the Krannert Art Museum 1961-1963/4.

WP: That's right, that's right. And so many of ours preserve elements of these statues that no longer exist on the originals, and that makes them significant too.

JD: And the Laocoön itself, they have reassembled more correctly than it was done by the Renaissance artists who put it together. And we have the Renaissance artist's version, so…

WP: Right, yeah. Yep, and that's the version that influenced artists from the 16th century to the 20th century, and therefore is extraordinarily important. But you can only see it as a plaster cast because the original has the original arm that Michelangelo knew was the way that that it should have gone.

JB: My undergraduate research was all about Renaissance pastiches and recreating sculptures and then the trend to de-restore old statues. It's incredible, what sort of things people decide about what should and should not be on display.

JD: And what is and isn't the way the Ancients would have done it.

WP: Right, yeah, that's true.

VF: Well, if we want to move on a little bit then, perhaps we can talk about the way that the collection was split up a little bit. We were wondering, who decided to organize the 19th century collection? The original collection, I suppose, first into Classical, European, Oriental museums. And also I believe in the timeline,[9] Wayne, you mentioned that the first non-European focused permanent exhibits went up between 68 and 70, and so we're just wondering on some clarification of what was it like before this?

WP: Yeah, my sense is that, well, it was Edmund James's[10] idea to have a Museum of Archaeology and Art. It's significant that the name was the Museum of Archaeology and Art because he didn't want it to be an Art Museum. He wanted it to be a cultural museum, and he made sure the word archaeology was first to emphasize that and then the Museum of European Cultures. They were two separate museums from the beginning when the museum was created and so that was what went on there. The Oriental Museum, it did not fully survive more than a little over a decade. Edmund James was very interested in the ancient near east, when he got the opportunity to purchase a few Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets. A fellow named Edgar Banks[11] wrote Arthur Pease[12], the Curator of the Classical Museum, and said "I have I have large numbers of cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia, and if you would like to buy ten or twenty of them for your collection to show what the earliest writing system looked like, I'd be very happy to sell you some." And Pease went to Edmund James, and James said, "well, if we're going to buy some cuneiform tablets, we should buy a genuine study collection." And so between 1913 and 1915 he bought seventeen-hundred-and-fifty tablets and most of that was done through presidential funds rather than directly through the Classical Museum's budget, because James

[9] See related resources

[10] Edmund James: President of UIUC, 1904-1920.

[11] Edgar Banks: Born 1866, died 1945. Consul in Baghdad (then under the Ottoman Empire), lecturer, antiquities dealer, and perhaps the inspiration for the fictional character Indiana Jones.

[12] Arthur Pease: Professor of Classics, 1909-1924.

really wanted one of those. In 1911, the first outside donor to the museum was William Hibbard and his wife. And they were members of the Egypt Exploration Society[13], provided funding for that and as a result were given the opportunity to name a museum that would receive artifacts from the Egypt Exploration Society's excavations in Egypt. And James managed to talk them into giving the artifacts to the Classical Museum that had not even opened when he got them to do it. And Arthur Pease said, "well, this is the classical museum. So give us mostly Graeco-Roman Egypt stuff." And so we've got this really nice collection of Graeco-Roman stuff. But that was ancient near east as well, so in 1917 he decided to hire an ancient near eastern historian because he was just really interested in it and he was good friends with James Breasted[14] of the Oriental Institute[15] in Chicago—just founding that up there. And so he decided to hire an ancient near eastern historian and hire him to be curator of an Oriental museum, which meant an ancient near eastern museum when he came, and so they hired A. T. Olmstead,[16] who was not particularly well known in 1917, but while he was here at the university, wrote an absolutely monumental classic, he wrote *The History of Ancient Assyria.*[17] In 1923 that really just pole-vaulted him into the upper echelon of major near eastern scholars and so naturally by 1928 he was stolen by the Oriental Institute in Chicago. But he came in to be the curator of the Oriental Museum, which then already had Egyptian stuff, and already had Mesopotamian stuff, and he was a Mesopotamianist. And so he added a number of important collections. He's the one that bought the collection of misfit Mesopotamian cylinder seals in 1919, brought 'em here. And it's amazing, he went to Minassian's antiquities shop in New York. And he said, "I'm from the University of Illinois. I'm interested in this collection. Can I take them home with me and just look at them at home at the University of Illinois?" and Minassian said, "of course you can!" And this collection that was for sale for $2500 in 1918/early 1919—$2500 was a lot of money—and they just they just gave them to him for him to take back with him when he went back to Illinois.

VF: **What a world it used to be…**

WP: It was a very different place. But he bought those. He bought some wonderful stuff from Göbekli Tepe in Turkey and he bought the beautiful painted floor slab from a temple at El Amarna in Egypt, which is one of our treasures as well. But when he left, then 28, either 28 or 29—I forgot much now—the Oriental Museum went back under the curatorship of the Classical Museum. Although it sort of stayed separate. It had a separate room, and in the 1940s, when our graduate student who got the plaster casts was in charge of the museum, he continued using Oriental museum numbers—OM numbers—for parts of the collection and when he had Edith Porada, the great cylinder seal authority from Columbia University, he asked her to set up Oriental Museum numbers for the cylinder seals and so she set them up in chronological order in her set and those were the Oriental Museum numbers for those seals until the new numbering

[13] Egypt Exploration Society: Founded in 1882, the Egypt Exploration Society promotes research on ancient Egypt, among other things.

[14] James Henry Breasted: Professor at the University of Chicago, founder of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, 1919.

[15] The Oriental Institute: A research center for Near Eastern studies and an archaeological museum, part of the University of Chicago.

[16] Albert T. Olmstead: Born 1880, died 1945. Professor of Oriental History at the University of Chicago.

[17] Olmstead, Albert. 1923. *History of Assyria*. C. Scriber's Sons: Chicago, IL.

system in 1974. But anyway, so it was independent for just a bit over a decade, 1917 to 1929, and then reverted under the authority of whoever was in charge of the Classics Museum.

VF: Interesting. And when it eventually moved to be the World Heritage Museum when it was first formed, we were wondering, what was left out of "World Heritage"? Because the term "World Heritage" should connote everyone, but of course it doesn't always do that.

WP: Yeah, well I would say. Namely, World Heritage Museum… the combined Classical and European cultures museum—The World Heritage Museum—by adding a small Asian and a small African section. The change of the name was the one really good thing that Oscar Dodson did. He was the one that pushed that. And it was entirely aspirational. You know, there was no… it was not a world culture museum. He argued that it should be looking around the world and not just at Europe and the near east, that it needed to be expanded. I've found the letters that discussed this and the committee decision to approve it and things like that. And that is the one major positive of Oscar Dodson because it did change the whole feel of the museum. He really gave it, I think, a different sense from what it had been up to and at that time. Does that correspond to what you think Jim?

JD: Yeah, it helped. I think very much when the Dean of LAS—and I'm having trouble with his name now—a psychology professor, wanted to close the museum...

WP: Humphreys.

JD: …Humphreys, Dean Humphreys. And by the fact that it wasn't so limited to just to the Graeco-Roman, European, and near eastern and Egyptian, but was wide open to the whole world, he had more trouble to get rid of it quickly, and wasn't able to in the end.

VF: Sure. Piggybacking off of that a little bit: do we have a good understanding of how it was organized? And I know we just kind of touched on this a little bit but: do we think the structure generally mimics the old individual museums?

JB: I think I mean: were they separated geographically?

WP: They are. They were in the museum… Jim, you were there, of course, much more than I was in the time when the World Heritage Museum was actually there. And…

JD: They had separate little rooms in Lincoln Hall. The European lot was on the north side and then the classical was on the south side and the hall was just a hall between them—the two museums—and then there was the Oriental Museum at the end. The Egyptian and the near eastern collection was in a little room at the north end and then they stuck in the European side, the African and they moved stuff around. This was Oscar's moving too in part. They stuck the African and Asian stuff at the end, going out into the rest of the 4th floor of Lincoln Hall at the end of the European collection.

WP: Yeah the museum there was like a big horseshoe with the North and South wings—European and classical—and then you had the hallway between them—the West hallway

between them—part of the museum, and then this expansion a bit into the eastern, the northeastern side. And then there were offices and stuff on the on the east and the east hallway at that point.

JD: And slowly, Barbara Bohen took over—Georgette started it, taking over some of those offices slowly. Barbara got the rest of them. And then there were the storage rooms, the little bird dropping rooms under the eaves, where the pigeons could get in, where they stored stuff.

WP: Yep, yes, I remember the metal file cabinets. The little card type cabinets that held the clay tablets in them in one of those one of those little pigeon rooms. Yep, it was not an ideal location. I mean in 1911 and 1912 it was the premier location on campus because Lincoln Hall was the Jewel for quite a while. And that was for the whole humanities at the time when it was first built. And James had had to push really hard to get a fourth floor to put museums on. That was the express reason why there was a fourth floor was to build those museums, and he had to fight with the state architect who insisted that there could only be three floors on any buildings built on the quad. And James just kept pushing him anyway to do something about it because he really wanted a fourth floor, and so that's how they built a building that looks on the outside like it is 3 stories high, but is in fact four stories, and you can see that on the interior court, but you can't see them. You can't see the 4th floor from the exterior.

VF: Speaking of the setup and the layout, it seems that the collection was—from what we've pulled out so far—it was fairly open to people. Is that correct? Was it more or less open back then than it is now?

WP: The difference is there were fewer artifacts that they were able to put out, and the style was put out as much as you had, essentially, I think. And so yeah, much more of it was out percentage wise. Certainly back then.

JD: And you could just walk around. You could come up any of the stairways that went all the way to the 4th floor, which is the east one. The two east side stairways went up, and there was a northeast—northwest corner stairway that was separate. To get in, that was the main entrance for the staff or the director who had just come up from his office right below on the third floor. Open it up in the morning, open the doors at the east side on both ends and just let people come and go. Students and whatever. So I was told. I was never here when it operated that way.

WP: Yeah, the budget: what I remember is that, whereas the original budget was two-thousand dollars a year for the classical and two-thousand for the European cultures and one-thousand dollars a year for the Oriental Institute through the 20s, and then when the Great Depression hit, that went down to about one hundred dollars—one-hundred-thirty-five dollars I think one year was the budget—and so they simply could not hire anybody, could not keep students up there to watch stuff. And if it was going to be of any use to anybody, they just had to open the doors and sure hope for the best.

JB: Clarification question: Oscar Dodson moving artifacts around. Do you have any idea what his goal was? Was it for display? To put the most eye-catching things in one place or…?

JD: Sort of that. This was a time when museums were no longer thought of as you put all of the objects of one type or class together in chronological order so you can see the development. That's how the museum was laid out in the cases, so you could see vases from geometric all the way through Roman, for instance, on the Classical side. But he—and following what was the museum fad of the time—liked to highlight things and so he would shift cases—closed cases—off. He gave cases away to make room for bigger areas and put other cases in storage and when he did he'd just empty the cases and if we were lucky keep at least the cards that had the information with the numbers on them for the objects in them, and so that's how the mix ups occurred: making room for it to be a somewhat more modern museum. And as it became the World Heritage Museum, he would put new acquisitions on display (apparently) in both the European and the Classical sections of his acquisitions, and so on. And he liked to throw parties in the museum. And so this is part of his fund raising and supporting the athletics of the department. That was how apparently—or so I was told—he was brought in, was running that money museum in Detroit and he was a great athletic money raiser, I think, for the University of Michigan. Before and then he got in to run the museum, but also running support for the athletic department. And so the museum became a kind of social section and you needed space for these without cases. The cases apparently filled the whole thing. What pictures I've seen that I remember show it just crammed with objects and cases and so there was no room to move around. And so he expanded the open areas, which is another prominent feature of museums. Modern museums as opposed to the old standard of getting everything out on display in order with the label and so on.

VF: We've got really one more large category that we have questions for. Joe, do you want to go ahead and take it off?

JB: Sure. So we want to move on to a little bit of the transfer from the World Heritage Museum to the Spurlock and into the new building. And while we're talking about museum styles, were there competing visions of what the Spurlock should look like, as far as its layout? Its structure?

WP: This is something that Jim was very much aware of and involved in and such.

JD: Yeah, I was with the committee and was running around hiring architects and talking concepts of the museum and how it was going to work, and so on and so forth. We wanted the Anthropology Department involved and did have some of that, but not as much as we maybe would have liked, and the Art History and History Departments, they were more involved—and Classics, of course—than was the Anthropology Department at the time. But has become more so as we have developed the museum, fortunately gotten faculty interested in getting real input and help with arranging things in a sensible order for the modern age, which is what we were aiming at. A World cultures museum that reflected the aim as well as the title this time. We wanted space. That was the real aim, and unfortunately because of the way the university's policy and the selling bequest when it comes in just at the lowest point of the drug that gave the Spurlocks all their money in the stock market, we lost maybe 3/4 or 2/3 perhaps of the amount of dollars we would have actually had to spend. So much of the time was spent trying to cut down our aspirations, because initially we thought we had no limits. We just had huge

amounts of money and then it immediately got cut down, when it finally did come in. We were working in planning on a much bigger bequest than what it actually sold for.

WP: Yeah, it was a. There was a lawsuit against the drug that was involved.

JD: I'm trying to think of the name of it.

JB: Prozac?

JD: Prozac!

JB: I remember this this story from our last conversation.

WP: Yeah, it just plunged. And then they sold the stock and then the suit got settled and it shot right back out to where it had been and yeah, we lost, what I think I remember hearing was that the expected amount was expected to be about twenty-five million dollars, and it wound up a little bit less than nine-thousand dollars.

JD: Nine-million, yeah.

WP: I mean million.

VF: Yeah, I was gonna say that's a that's a real hit, I don't think you can fund a museum with only nine-thousand dollars.

WP: Yeah, yeah. So that was a really unfortunate thing.

JD: I wanted to have space for storage. Space… We just gave up a number of things. We wanted a shop, an auditorium; luckily we got the auditorium thanks to Knight, and we wanted some other things but had to compromise those out. We got the biggest galleries we could get for the money, and as much storage space. But it kind of also left the rest of the museum space very cramped.

WP: Yeah, at one point—and was this when you guys were doing the original planning about this—The Museum of Natural History, which had been shut down, was going to be part of the Spurlock.

JD: Yeah, that was after we had got the plans done and the building was… we knew what was going to be in it, and then the Natural History Museum it had been wanted to be closed forever for whatever reason, again, because just like plaster casts, natural history museums and natural history collections were at a downturn. This was after they had remained a strong feature. And so the current trend was to get rid of the small ones on campuses. Because just like plaster casts were no longer needed for drawing, so these natural history museums and collections were no longer needed for university education, although they were great for the younger levels. The Natural History Museum was really designed for elementary and middle school students, yeah. There was a sad loss, but the collections have been stored and are still available for

research as needed and unfortunately that as we know more about genetics these historical collections have become very important because they can now use them for DNA tracing and other aspects of genetic research that were not available. Teeth in particular, but also the bones often have genetic information preserved. So they've, just like casts have come back, so Natural History collections have come back. But that one was unfortunate that unlike the closing of the World Heritage Museum, it is closed and no longer.

WP: …gone as a museum, yeah. Who was it? I talked with one of the geologists over there who said that more of this stuff was going to be sent off to the Illinois State Museum for storage.

JD: Yeah, a lot of it was.

WP: But even more was supposed to, but the night before the trucks came to pick things up, several of the geology professors went in. And they stuck sticky notes on a whole bunch of things saying: "Keep here, -geology department." And the trucks came and left those pieces, and went off. And nobody ever tried to get rid of those again so.

JD: That museum was intricately tied with the departments in the natural history building, including geology, and sorting out what was the Natural History museum's, what was the geology department's, or that department's… it's almost impossible.

WP: Yeah. Yeah sometimes, you have to be proactive in making sure that stuff you use in your in your teaching stays. And that was that was a spectacularly good example of…

JD: Preserving your teaching collection.

WP: That's right. Yeah, so it was good. As you can see, all of this stuff is interwoven. Talk about stuff that is not explicitly the museum—Spurlock and its predecessors. It has to do with the wide range of what was going on in the university and it's an extraordinarily complicated story, that you might not expect for a relatively small museum, but in fact, it's over 100 years old. And the 20th century was a very complex century. And it shows up even in the story of museums on campus.

JB: Let's see. From what I understand, a lot of the stuff we've been talking about wouldn't apply to this, but has the Spurlock ever repatriated items to their original country, or have you considered repatriating items? Or decided against it?

WP: Yeah, even though the university has just embraced the NAGPRA[18] Protocols—Chancellor Jones just did a big thing about that—we have been working with the NAGPRA stuff almost since the museum opened. And Jennifer White, our registrar, actually sent lists to—I think it was—900 separate tribes across the country, lists of things that we either could directly relate to their tribe, or to their general area that might include several different tribal possibilities. And we got a few requests for repatriation of some items. And all of those that fit the criteria were repatriated. We also, when I first arrived, had a large number of things that had been excavated

[18] The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, passed in 1990. NAGPRA requires that all institutions which receive federal funding repatriate specific Native American cultural objects.

by the State Archaeological Survey in the decades. I think maybe there were some things from the 30s/40s. Anyway, the Illinois State Archaeological Survey that's located on campus had part of those artifact collections, and we had part of those artifact collections. And we decided that maybe it didn't make sense for us to have, and most of it was stone and pottery fragments and things like that. It made sense for them to have all of it so that people who were studying the whole collection didn't have to go from one to the other location. And so we actually removed several thousand artifacts from our collection that went over to the Illinois State Archaeological Survey. And, that also meant that they were the ones who had been dealing with issues of repatriation of some of that material as well. But yeah, I think we have actually gone through all of the levels of NAGPRA repatriation. I know she has also done work with numerous other repatriation treaties and agreements and such to look at all of the materials that we have and determine whether there's anything that ought to be returned. There are a few things that we've had since the 1950s that therefore don't fit into the—what is it, the ICOM? Yeah, treaty 1970 and following—that we have become aware were plundered from graves. And therefore it was my impression when I was retiring that we were going to be contacting museums in several countries to determine whether we could get actual permission to keep them, or return them. So Spurlock has been really, really careful to work on that. I know they've been going through some of our European stuff to make sure that none of it is on the Nazi theft list as well.

JD: The NAGPRA business is one of the contributing factors to closing the Natural History Museum, because the Natural History Museum had a lot of Native American artifacts as well as bones, and that stuff was to be repatriated and they felt it wasn't appropriate for us to have such a museum. so it's just part of what encouraged—besides the no longer having an interest in the Natural History, animal bones and so on—the human aspects of it were considered inappropriate, so altogether that resulted in the desire to close the museum.

JD: Yeah, one of the strange things about the history of natural history museums is the fact that natural history museums did geology and did dinosaurs, and prehistoric animals, and modern animals, and things like that, and Indians, you know who were part of the natural world! They weren't really part…

VF: Yeah, I was thinking that when you mentioned it, yes.

WP: …yeah, so the Native American stuff was just part of the Natural History Museum. The American Museum of Natural History in New York, while they've worked hard to break that that bond, they have the animal/mineral part and they have the non-white section of humanity in their museum. And that was just all part of the way natural history museums worked. And so it was also not a particularly great thing, so the idea of bringing much of that collection over to a world cultures museum really made sense.

JD: The Field Museum in Chicago is another example, yes. Grand scale Natural History museums of the old order.

WP: That's true, that's true, yeah, yep.

JB: Let's see. We had a question that's actually not at all about the Spurlock. But it is about some artifacts. The Krannert Art Museum has its collection of Graeco-Roman vases and we were just curious if you knew anything about that?

JD: You mean the Greek and Roman vases? The pottery?

VF: Yeah, yeah. And really how they came to end up in the Krannert versus in the Spurlock.

JD: Weller's[19] idea was just to show originals, and that is part of the reason they got rid of the casts. And they were given this trees collection, which is a good collection of oil paintings through art history, but they wanted the background of earlier art history and so began collecting in the 60s and 70s, the ancient and medieval, and actually had not only the ancient gallery, but a medieval gallery for a while and then have changed that around. So the idea was to get a collection of originals and so they have a pretty good collection of things that were purchased from dealers in the 60s and 70s. And Muriel Christensen[20] was the director and she would get things and add them to the collection. So that's where that came from. In a sense, the two museums work very well together on the ancient and medieval level, if we could ever do that. That was one of my thoughts when we were planning a new museum was to put it in that football field right next to the Krannert Art Museum and have the two museums share the parts that they share.

WP: Oh, that would be great, yeah.

Yeah, one of the things to keep in mind about the museum: Krannert opened in 1961, I believe, and was well funded and was beautiful and was new, and 1951's museums in the attic of Lincoln Hall were essentially moribund and were seen as filled with plaster casts. And so the Krannert just got all of the energy, and all of the donations and such in the 60s. And when that great collection of Peruvian materials they have there—I'm pretty sure that was a that was a gift from somebody, they didn't purchase that, but I'm not sure about that—

JD: I think it's mostly a gift; there was some purchasing involved.

WP: Yeah, but it was somebody who gave it. Well, it would make more sense to have that in in a world cultures type of context—The World Heritage Museum. But if those owners—people who owned the collection—looked at the Krannert Art Museum and then went up to the 4th floor of Lincoln Hall and saw the European collection that had to be closed in the summers 'cause it got too hot, there's no way they would have given that collection…

JD: Right.

WP: …wouldn't even consider giving the collection to the World Heritage Museum at the time. I think we would have gotten it if we had been in the Spurlock building, because it makes much

[19] Allen Weller.

[20] Perhaps Muriel Christensen, now an expressionist and realist painter in Chicago.

more sense in our context than in theirs, but the fact is that it's at the University of Illinois because the Krannert Art Museum was willing to take something that was a little bit outside their area. And the people looked at the building and said "yeah, this is this is good" and so we do have it. I have always thought that someday, if we ever are able to expand the museum, that it would be good for some future director to talk to Krannert about moving that collection to the Spurlock because it really belongs there.

JD: Yeah, it's most appropriate. That was the idea of putting the two museums together. They're…

WP: Exactly, sure.

JD: …complementary, and now one has to go to two different ends of the campus to see all the best things that we have on display.

WP: Yeah, that's true.

VF: And I am pretty confident that sometime in the future, we will be able to expand, it's just a matter of when.

WP: Yeah, yeah. I agree.

JD: Yeah, and it's always been the plans to have a much bigger museum there than we have right now for the Spurlock.

VF: Right.

WP: Yeah, in 1912 Arthur Pease—I believe Arthur Pease. It was either him or the first director of the Museum of European Cultures—wrote an article about the the new museum and one of the things he said was "the space is too small, and we hope someday to be able to expand into a building of our own." And a long time, for that to happen, but these things do happen.

VF: Yeah, it happened eventually. One final question. This is pretty open ended I think, but we're wondering, to get a little bit more about you guys in your work in the museum specifically, what were your visions like for the museum? And now that we have some hindsight, were there any things that you would change? Or were there any things that you thought went particularly well?

WP: Jim, you want to start?

JD: Yeah, just having the Spurlock Museum there has really opened things up. Just as Wayne said the Krannert Art Museum became a focus, so has the Spurlock now. Again, regrettable that we have to have two museums rather than one combined museum, but nevertheless. And it would be good to fill in some of the gaps in the cultural areas; Mexico with our large Mexican population and Puerto Rican or island Caribbean island with our large percentage of those people. Needs a lot more things added that would be beneficial in my terms. And I can't think…

WP: South Asia, yeah.

JD: South Asia. South Asia is the other one.

WP: You know we don't have much stuff at all and…

JD: India and South Asia, yeah.

WP: Right, yeah. So that's another area. When I became director, there were several things that I wanted to do. One was to revive the usage of the museum by university professors, and we were able to bring in considerably more people than we had in its opening years and I felt good about that.

VF: For sure.

WP: Yeah, and then, the upper administration really didn't have an understanding of the museum, which is the only reason why I became director, because they didn't really think about the need of a director to be a professional museum person who had degrees in museum studies and experience in museums. It was still seen, sort of like it was on the 4th floor of Lincoln Hall, as something that a professor could do, and still teach a couple of classes a year. And that's what the expectation was when I got it, that I would still be teaching half my classes and the other part of the time I'd be the director of the museum. Well, you can't. You can't do that. The museum is way too big and there's way too much going on. And so they did finally cut my classes so I could really be full time at the museum. But it took a while to get the upper administration to understand the importance of this museum, and why it behooved them to support a museum that was dedicated to understanding the cultures of the world and such. And I have always felt that the way the museum was set up actually worked remarkably well to make the kinds of points that need to be made for the citizens of Illinois to understand that people around the world may have different practices and things like that. But they are people. Everybody, are people, and that's an important thing to do and it's certainly become clear in the last four years that there are a lot of people in the United States who do not think that people who look differently are really people and such. We need to be part of trying to change their minds about that.

JD: And that's one of the things that I thought Wayne did remarkably well for advancing both the museum and the world cultures aspect, was to move the incoming students—or prospective students—operation into the museum entrance way so that people wandering through the campus from everywhere get an introduction to the museum, and I think that has helped a lot. They get it from the very beginning of their association with the University of Illinois.

WP: Right. Yeah, during that time virtually every freshman coming in had already been in the building and knew it was there, whereas it being somewhat on the periphery of campus, during the years before, it was surprising how few people actually seemed to be aware of the museum. And so it really did gain a great deal of recognition and visibility and such, and I did feel really good about that. So that was a good thing. But yeah, I think, Elizabeth is my successor. I really like her and I like a lot of her ideas about where things should go and where

we will begin to start breaking down, in certain places, the “here's over here South American culture. Here's North American culture. Here's European culture. Here's African culture.” And they're going to be focusing on a lot of exhibits in the future that deal with how this wide spectrum of cultures deal with individual, specific things across cultures and such, and we didn't do as much of that when I was there, as I think they are hoping to do in the future, but I think that's going to be a new and a good way of looking again, showing the continuity of human experience across cultures. And so I think that's a nice move.

JD: And I agree with that our initial attention was to enhance the world cultures aspect. But now we have to get “it's all one world together” aspects going.

WP: Yeah, we did that in the central core. You know that was the point of the central core, to say, “you know, the cultures are… by nature, humans are similar, by practice, they've become different” as the quote from the Buddha says, and the central core had things from all the different cultures, and so from the beginning that had been an element. And now, she's going to focus more on that element than on the individual cultures—the specificity of individual cultures—and I think that'll be that'll be a nice direction to go for a while. Yeah, I think this is really good. Yeah, I feel optimistic.

JB: It's great, yeah. Before we end this session, is there anything that you guys think should be mentioned or talked about that we haven't talked about already?

WP: I think my concluding statement would be that one of the things that astounded me when I became director of the museum was just how much remarkable material the museum actually has. And you know, we have 4% of our collection on display. And it is filled with all sorts of amazing things. I love the Athenian juror’s ticket—the bronze Athenian juror’s ticket—that we have on display that has extraordinary deep and abiding meaning about what people are responsible for among their compatriots and such. You know it's this beautiful thing. It was reused. I think there are four names, the parts of which are preserved on the ticket, so it goes through generations of people. And it talks about your civic duty, and what made Athens, Athens. And it's just this tiny little piece and people just walk right by and don't even notice it's there, yet it's really, it's really important and it's here! I mean there aren't very many of them in the United States, are there Jim?

JD: No, there are, other than ours, three others. One in Canada at the Royal Ontario Museum, one in Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Museum and one in the Met in New York, so we're as far West as they go in this country.

WP: Yeah, and it's an extraordinary thing. And our Letter of James Fragment, from the Oxyrhynchus papyri. But it's the oldest surviving fragment of The letter of James and it's extraordinarily important, and it's part of an early 3rd century Codex book. And eventually when the book fell apart, somebody took that page and they folded it up and they apparently put it in a pendant and it became an amulet until the 4th century, when it finally was thrown away. But it too talks about, not just the fact that it's a text of great importance because it's such an early biblical text, but it has a life of its own. And you can see it from the condition that it's in, and from where it was found. They found it in 4th century materials and they dated it to the 4th

century and then Kurt Aland[21] looked at it and said, “no, that's early 3rd century. Or 2nd, but probably early 3rd century.” And suddenly it's the oldest fragment of James, and they surely certainly would not have sold it to us if it had been dated to the early 3rd century. We're very fortunate that Hunt and Grenfell[22] misdated it in the original publication. But no, it has this fantastic story, and the Bardeen music box and the Laocoön plaster cast with its connection to Gregory and its connection to Lorado Taft. You know they're just… these artifacts are just filled with stories and information and such that I hope that we will eventually be able to make that kind of information visible. And I think with newer technologies it'll be easier to do that kind of thing. But it's just filled with absolutely unique and valuable things that tell people about humanity.

VF: Right.

JD: Wayne made a start of that with the cylinder seals with the great photographs and the display there. My ending is perhaps a little more somber and that is that the COVID-19 pandemic is really hitting museums hard because their educational purpose is to have a version of an authentic object, such as the plaster casts, where you can see the full dimensions or things like the cuneiform tablets where you can see the beginnings of writing and get a sense of what the actual things are like that you don't get when we're doing things virtually. And how that is going to ultimately be affected by this pandemic since changes are going to be great. After we come out of this, we're not going to go directly back to what we were. It’ll be a different society in that sense probably better.

WP: Yeah. That is true. Yeah, there is no doubt that going to see the plaster cast of Laocoön is a much better experience than looking at any photograph of the Laocoön on your computer screen.

VF: 100% yeah.

01:59:20 **Wayne Pitard**

Yep, there is just nothing like seeing something actually in front of your eyes. And in that way, museums, you know, we hope people will recognize that in the post-COVID future. But it really is a unique thing.

VF: Right. Well, thank you so much for coming in and meeting with us again. We're trying not to take up too much time. Every minute you give us is really nice.

WP: I'll send you a bill.

JB: Yeah, send Clara the bill.

VF: As I said before, we're in talks about actually going to the Spurlock, 'cause I think that would be a really, unique visit. And I'll try to keep you guys updated on that.

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[21] Kurt Aland: Born 1915, died 1994. Biblical scholar and German theologian.

[22] Grenfell, Bernard P. and Arthur S. Hunt. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri Part X*. Egypt Exploration Fund: London, 1914. pp. 16-18.

JD: OK, great.

VF: Are there any qualms or anything, anything you want to bring up before we go?

JD: Not that I can think of.

VF: OK.

WP: I'm feeling good about all this.

VF: All right. Great yeah, I'm feeling excellent about all this so.

JD: Very good, I enjoyed it.

VF: All right. Yeah.

JB: And we can't thank you enough.

WP: I'm glad you guys are doing this. Yes, here we go.

VF: We're enjoying it. One way or the other. Alright, thank you so much. And have a great weekend.

WP: Well, you too, take care.