

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE

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Chancellor Interviews SIUE Archivist

Chancellor Pembroke asks Kerber to explain the multiple functions of the University's archives.

Archives protect the history of the University.

The job of the Archivist is preservation of the University's critical records. The Archivist also trains University personnel to understand appropriate retention and preservation.

The Archivist also writes and documents the development of the University community in various media.

Asked if the office is proactive or reactive, Kerber says he prefers to educate and motivate people in a proactive manner. Sometimes, he gets an unexpected request with a short turnaround. He works closely with a variety of departments that produce written documents, videos, streaming broadcasts, performance recordings, and pictures.

There is currently a push to digitize, and Kerber is working closely with state of Illinois historians.

Kerber is the Library's primary point person in collecting assets, for example the "Hapmeyer Collection", which traces the development of American soccer in the twentieth century. It is the largest collection of its type.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Mississippi River Festival (MRF). The Music faculty instituted MRF to provide opportunities for the music faculty to work with the St. Louis Symphony. The Chancellor approached the Symphony to develop a partnership from the summer of 1969.

Organizers sited the MRF on the northern side of the University in a natural outdoor amphitheater. This was also the site for SIUE's early Commencement ceremonies. They planned a permanent structure on the western edge of the campus, but in the interim, they constructed a temporary facility between April and June of 1969, completed almost entirely by the Facilities workers on campus. There was a box office, roads, restrooms, and a performance space in the iconic "MRF tent".

MRF ultimately drew the "best of the best" of contemporary artists, something of an informal Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The spectrum of performers was staggering. Almost every iconic American rock and roll band played the MRF.

Some of the performers visited out in the community of Edwardsville, others just performed and left.

Jackson Browne appeared several times and referenced the MRF at a recent concert performance in St. Louis.

Kerber states this is the only story of its type, he is not aware of any other school developing a successful program of this type incorporating everything from symphony performances to topnotch contemporary rock and roll artists.

The MRF is overgrown now and has reverted to its natural state, but the SIUE archives holds an excellent photographic history of the first nine years of MRF. In fact, the Archivist office put out a book of pictures in honor of the 50th anniversary of the MRF formation earlier in 2019.

Tune in to Segue at 9 a.m. this Sunday, July 21, on WSIE 88.7 FM the Sound and siue.edu/wsie to hear Pembroke's and Kerber's conversation in its entirety.