The story I am about to tell you is about Texas, and more specifically Denton, Texas, in the early 1970s. At that time a number of Texas academic libraries and public libraries had music collections, although not all of them had separate music libraries. Our university was very fortunate in having a music library that had existed as a separate entity since 1941, when it was founded by music librarian Anna Harriet Heyer. She became renowned in the 1950s for her important research tool *Historical Sets, Collected Editions, and Monuments of Music*. For anyone not familiar with this source, it indexed all of the works in sets such as *Musica Britannica*, and all of the works in composers’ so-called “complete works,” back when no other source did so.

Shortly after Miss Heyer retired from the University of North Texas, she went on to become music librarian at Texas Christian University. In 1971 Morris Martin was hired as UNT’s new head music librarian. Let me tell you a little about Morris, because it is very relevant to this story. He was from Fort Worth. He got his bachelor’s degree in music and eventually his master’s degree in musicology at North Texas, but he went out of state to get his master’s degree in library science. He attended the University of Illinois’s renowned library school, and it was there that he became involved in the Music Library Association. He joined the Midwest chapter, which counted quite a few well-known music libraries and music librarians among its participants. His first job was in the Midwest as music reference librarian at the University of Iowa, where he worked for Rita Benton. His found his experiences with MLA and its flourishing Midwest chapter to be very beneficial to
him as he started his career.

When he got back to Texas to be music librarian at UNT, there was no regional chapter of MLA for him to join. At that time music librarians did participate in the American Library Association and its Texas Chapter, TLA. Some of them were involved in TLA’s Arts Roundtable. At least in that way they were able to connect with one another professionally, so that music librarians could exchange ideas and help each other.

It was through such connections that certain Texas music librarians came up with a great idea: why not establish a Texas chapter of the Music Library Association? Morris received support for his idea in Denton when a new assistant music librarian, Bela Foltin, arrived at UNT in 1974. Like Morris, Bela had graduated from library school at the University of Illinois, and he had also experienced the benefits of that strong Midwest chapter of MLA. Once the idea of a Texas chapter gained ground, allies from various libraries emerged. There was widespread interest not only from university librarians, but also from public librarians and even from school librarians all over our very large state. It is hard for someone who has never lived in Texas to understand just how big Texas is, and to understand just how far one university or public library can be from every other one. Thus, it is particularly impressive that so many people who were located far from one another could get together to make this happen.

One enthusiastic participant was Donna Mendro, the long-time music cataloger at the Dallas Public Library. She had also come from Illinois and worked there for several years. All through her career, she was very active in the Music Library Association and her local chapters. She was one of the people who worked especially hard to make the Texas chapter a reality. She and the late Betty Pope, music cataloger at UNT, wrote a history of the founding of our chapter that is available online via the TMLA website.
As many of you know, I have been at the University of North Texas for a very long time. I came in 1971, the same year as Morris Martin, but I came as a doctoral student in musicology rather than a librarian. I did start out as a part-time worker in the UNT music library in that notable year of 1974. That is probably why I vividly remember some early activities of the new Texas chapter. Morris and various colleagues were working overtime to promote and publicize it, and then as now, its meetings were mostly held at a few universities where the librarians were active participants and there were suitable facilities to hold meetings. Not surprisingly, one of those universities was UNT, and I remember how it was when the meetings were held in our library. It was quite simple: if you were a library worker and/or an advanced musicology student, you were going. Furthermore, Morris saw to it that all students got in free.

Let’s fast-forward to the 1990s. At that time our chapter was well-established and flourishing. Ruth Ann McTyre, who got her master’s in library science from the University of North Texas, was by then music librarian at Baylor University. She and a few others got the idea that the Texas chapter of MLA had an interesting history, and that it might be a good idea to undertake an oral history project. Baylor University played prominently in this idea, for Baylor has a famous oral history department, and Ruth Ann had easy access to some impressive experts who worked there.

Please know that by then MLA already had had an oral history initiative in place for some time, and several other chapters were involved in it. Ruth Ann and colleagues decided to write a proposal to get a grant from MLA to undertake the Texas project. Much to their delight, they were awarded the grant.

Not long after, fate intervened. Ruth Ann left our chapter, because she was hired as music librarian at the University of Iowa, the same school where Morris Martin had begun his career. This had been her pet project, but she was forced to leave it behind.
Thus it was that some of the rest of us became involved. Somebody decided that I should coordinate the project. I was no expert on oral history, so I set out to learn as much as I could. I found out that doing a good job on oral history is much more than sitting across the table from an informant and turning on a tape recorder. I found that the well-known book by Edward “Sandy” Ives, *The tape-recorded interview: a manual for fieldworkers in folklore and oral history*, served as a very good text book and guide; it really helped me to know the important points to consider and address in a project such as ours.

We made a list of people to interview, and we have not yet finished. Let me mention one person who was not to be one of our subjects: Anna Harriet Heyer. She was alive and well at the time we began, but the people at Texas Christian had subjected her to such a barrage of oral history interviews when she went to work for them that we deemed it inappropriate to ask her to do any more. Anything she wanted to say about TMLA and a whole host of other subjects had already been recorded for posterity.

During the time we were making our plans there was a welcome change. The computer revolution hit, and we were able to use our grant money to purchase a digital recorder to take the place of an old tape recorder that was bequeathed to us at the start of the project. I am pleased to report that Bruce Evans was able to make good use of it when he conducted his interesting interview with catalogers Donna Mendro and Judy Weidow. Some of you will likely remember them, for they were very active in MLA throughout their long and distinguished careers.

I will now let Bruce Evans tell you of his adventures in interviewing them. We wanted each of them to do a separate interview, but Judy demurred and said she doubted that she had enough to say to fill a
whole interview. She may have been mistaken, but in any case I think the joint interview turned out to be a very good idea.