



THE TURFGRASS INFORMATION CENTER —A GREAT RESOURCE IN JEOPARDY?

By Monroe S. Miller

Almost all of us have a place where we really like to be, a place where we are very much at home, comfortable and contented.

For a lot of Wisconsin golf course superintendents that place might be the shop or some corner of the golf course.

For other people, that place could well be a quiet Wisconsin trout stream or a peaceful oak woods.

There are those who like their neighborhood tavern; others have a simpler requirement, like a favorite chair.

Personally, a favorite haven of mine is a spot in a room full of books. Libraries delight me to no end.

Whenever I travel and wherever I travel, I can tell a lot about a town by looking at its library and checking out its newspaper. I do both at every opportunity.

A visitor to my home can tell something about me by surveying my own library. Our family room is home to thousands of books; our shelves are full.

My liking goes to history and the U.S. presidency, sports and nature and agriculture, Wisconsin and New England, American literature classics and travel. You will see practically no fiction.

The first library that caught my fancy was the Dwight Parker Library in my hometown of Fennimore, Wisconsin. The books were housed in main street's most impressive building, and my grandmother was one of the librarians. Once, when I was a kid, I was sure every book ever written was right there in the Parker library.

Since then I have developed quite a list of favorite libraries. The small one room library in Surrey, New Hampshire is special. I was there one autumn evening with Cheryl and my parents. We were researching grandparents six generations back. The librarian had a crackling fire in the fireplace, and our research was fruitful. That snug little building will forever be in my memory.

I really like the Carnegie Library in Howell, Michigan. It is a perfect example of Andrew Carnegie's generosity to

many generations of Americans in towns all across the country.

The city library in Springfield, Massachusetts is another classic—an old building with great architecture and very friendly people and a good collection of books.

Wisconsin's State Historical Society Library is a place every citizen should visit. Located on the University of Wisconsin campus at the end of State Street, this is a world class collection in a classic room. I absolutely love it, and as a student I spent many hours studying there. It is a great place to read a book.

Dartmouth College has a wonderful library. So does the University of Michigan Law School. Much of the UM Law Library is subterranean. Yet because of the work of a clever architect, you'd never know it when you are inside. I won't spoil the surprise you'll experience by saying anymore than that.

When Middleton built its new library last year, we were all pleased. The building is very distinctive and inviting from the outside. Inside, it is just what you think a community library should be for its citizens, students and scholars.

I am particularly lucky because my place of work is about five minutes away from one of America's great agricultural libraries—the Steenbock Memorial Library. In 1990, Steenbock was the Wisconsin Library Association's "Library of the Year". The award recognizes achievement in service—read that "user-friendly"—and is a great honor because it uses a peer review process to determine the award.

The Steenbock Library was built in 1968—the year I graduated—and is named for Harry Steenbock. Steenbock was the Wisconsin born and world famous biochemist who discovered the process for enriching foods with Vitamin D.

Our agricultural library had an interesting beginning. In 1888, Professor Stephen M. Babcock, the famous pioneering dairy scientist, donated his first salary check to buy books to establish a small agriculture library.

A year later, William Henry, the first dean of the College of Agriculture, used Babcock's gift to buy a small collection of books. He housed them in South Hall on Bascom Hill. The collection grew and moved to Agriculture Hall in 1903 when the building was completed. The agriculture library was still there while I was a student and moved to Steenbock when those quarters were completed. The agriculture library actually became a department in the College in 1924.

One of my most useful and interesting undergraduate classes was one in library science, taught by faculty in the agriculture library.

There is another library I'd like to tell you about, although many of you may already know more about it than I do.

In many ways, it stands alone. It has all the things I like about my other favorite libraries, and more. This library has turfgrass management as its focus.

Of course, I am referring to the Turfgrass Information Center at Michigan State University Libraries.

It is located in the heart of the MSU campus, a beautiful land grant college I have visited twice. Both times were trips to go to the Center.

This is a place most of you would enjoy visiting. The TIC is found on the second floor of the main campus library. It was started in 1984 and since becoming operational, it has provided students and professors, industry and golf course superintendents and others interested in turfgrass management an enormous resource of information.

The reason for locating the TIC at Michigan State University has a Wisconsin connection. The MSU library is the home of the O.J. Noer Memorial Turfgrass Collection. The Noer Collection includes O.J.'s personal library and over the years it has been supplemented by gifts from all across the country. It has become recognized as one of the best collections in the world of these materials.

One of the goals of the TIC was to provide access to the Noer Collection. MSU was the obvious choice for a home.

The TIC has had three main charges from the beginning:

1.) to provide access to the published materials covering turfgrass research and management. That effort is called the turfgrass information file (TGIF); 2.) to maintain the Noer Collection and expand it, and; 3.) to deliver documents or copies to those in need of the materials. Today, TIC has almost 20,000 references and most of them have been abstracted.

The USGA provided much of the money from the beginning to get the TIC operational and to keep it operating. The GCSAA has been an excellent cooperator and partner in this program.

Not enough can be said about the Noer Foundation and its generous contributions over the years.

It's been my view, unfortunately, that the TIC and the TGIF have been underused by all of us. I am guilty to the maximum. That guilt is overburdened with worry these days.

The free ride for us is nearly over.

The USGA Research Committee funding ends early next year. This subsidy has amounted to about \$70,000 each year.

What will happen when it's gone?

The USGA has been unequivocal in its expectations from the turf industry; we must assume the responsibility for this great resource. That simply means all of us have to extend our support when the subsidy ends.

As Peter Cookingham, TIC manager, has said, "the reality of funding for academic libraries in the current economic climate, combined with the explosion of information resources, means less attention for subdisciplines like turf culture."

He goes on to say that "the Noer Collection is the finest publicly-accessible collection of turfgrass literature in the world, and perhaps the finest of any. May it always be so."

The Noer Foundation, as noted, has supported the Noer Collection since the beginning and continues its generous

support. They want to do more. The void will be the USGA money.

So what can we do, individually and as a group?

The first is to become a subscriber to the TGIF. In the short-term, 500 new subscribers are needed. Jim Belfield and Jerry Kershasky are working on getting 30 new TIC subscribers from Wisconsin, and I'm trying to help them. You can help by becoming a new subscriber for a relatively small amount of money. When approached, please give serious thought to signing up. **AND YOU DO NOT NEED A COMPUTER TO MAKE USE OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO TIC.**

Once an endowment is established by Cookingham, the WGCSA will have a great opportunity to contribute to this information resource that records our past and will play a major role in our future.

The fate of the TIC is literally in your hands and mine. We simply cannot let this tremendous resource slide away.

Wisconsin Golf Course Quiz



A SOILS TEST

By Monroe S. Miller

Look for the answers
to the WISCONSIN GOLF
COURSE QUIZ on page 33.

How could any golf course superintendent not be interested in the science of the soil? Soils are, after all, the stuff from which golf courses are made.

Logically, every human being should be a lover of the soil. Without soil, life on this earth would not be possible. Food, clothing and prosperity are all possible, ultimately, because of the soils of the world.

This issue's quiz for Wisconsin golf course superintendents is about Wisconsin soils. Before taking the exam you might want to walk your golf course as a reminder of their importance to you. Do some hand texturing to polish up your practical skills. Scoop up a container of fresh loam from somewhere on your golf course and enjoy the rich aroma.

Then, and only then, with a sharp pencil in hand, sit back and take this Wisconsin soils test.

1. *True or False.* Most often when Wisconsin golf course superintendents prepare topdressing or

rootzone mixes, the peat amendment is imported from outside our state borders. I have used peat from both Iowa and from Indiana.

The reason, obviously, is because Wisconsin doesn't have any organic soils of significance.

2. Speaking of peat and its value as a rootzone amendment, it is a fact that a cubic foot of peat, when dried, weighs about eight pounds. How much does that peat weigh when it is saturated with water?

3. *Circle the Correct Answer.* The soil texture covering the most area in Wisconsin is (silt, sand, loams/sandy loams).

4. *True or False.* A routine soil test for a turf area sample analyzed at the State Soils Testing Laboratory includes values for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

5. *Circle the Correct Answer.* The average soil pH for the ten major soil regions in Wisconsin is (6.2, 6.5, 7.0, 7.2).

6. The Wisconsin state tree is the sugar maple. The state bird is the robin. The state flower is a violet. What is the state soil?

7. *Fill in the Blank.* When a peat undergoes decomposition it becomes a _____.

8. *Fill in the Blank.* The basic principle of soil science in the USGA Green Section putting green specifications is _____.

9. About 70% of Wisconsin soils are derived from two primary sources. What are those sources?

10. Name the most famous graduate of the Department of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.