

Pennsylvania Libraries: *Research & Practice*

Interview

In the PaLRaP Spotlight: Thomas Stocker, Librarian/Archivist

*National Association of Watch & Clock Collectors (NAWCC), Inc.,
Columbia, PA*

Tell us a little about your background, what led you to the NAWCC?

My journey began as a history undergraduate student and later I earned a Master of Arts degree in history. During my master's program, I realized I wanted to work in the museum world. After graduating with my M.A., I narrowed my focus to the library and archive sector of museums and applied for an M.S.L.S. program through Clarion University. Unfortunately, COVID-19 was still looming over the museum and library world and finding a job was quite difficult. I stumbled across a listing for the NAWCC in late July 2023 and figured I would apply, since the advertised position was for a librarian/archivist, the focus of my M.S.L.S. degree. I never thought my love of history would take me to a clock and watch museum, but it has turned out to be a great experience and has taught me so much about how clocks and watches helped shape our world.

According to the website, the organization began as The Watch Collectors club in 1943, then expanded to include clock collectors. Now, with nearly 10,000 members worldwide, "the NAWCC is committed to being the world leader, educator, and advocate for horology and for everyone interested in timepieces and the art and science of timekeeping."

Describe the Fortunat Mueller-Maerki Library & Research Center (LARC).

As a library and research center, we are dedicated to assisting our members and the public with their inquiries regarding clocks, watches, and all things to do with timekeeping. Our collection started small and was housed at the Franklin Institute in the early years of the organization. Now we are the home of one of the largest collections of horology-related books, periodicals, and archival materials from all over the globe. The pride of our archival material is the Hamilton Watch Company Collection, which includes over 200 archival boxes, storage tubes, and microfilm of technical drawings, project records, photographs, and more. We have such a plethora of archival material on so many aspects of horology that even after being here for nearly a year I am still familiarizing myself with all of it.

Since the NAWCC is a member-driven organization, the majority of our services involve assisting members with their research questions. I receive all types of questions, from simply identifying the maker of a clock to researching what wiring goes with which electrical time-recording clock. We assist nonmembers with their questions as well, though they don't remain nonmembers for long once they experience the library, the National Watch & Clock Museum (in the same building as LARC), our School of Horology (located across the street), and our journal, the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*. Members of the NAWCC may borrow books on loan, and the public is welcome to use them in the library.

Describe your role at the library and NAWCC.

Part of my role is answering member inquiries about all things horological as well as sending books on loan to members. My duties also include handling the archival materials: accessioning, cataloging, organizing, and rehousing items. There is never a dull moment with this task, as I often find new information and materials that help with future inquiries or museum exhibits. I'm grateful that my internships and volunteer work at other museums during my college years taught me specific rehousing and digitization processes.

Another task is researching information for a regular column, "This Month in Horological History," in our monthly e-newsletter that goes to members and friends of the NAWCC. Recent topics for this column include birthdays of important clockmakers and watchmakers, key patents and their impact on horology, and releases of groundbreaking timepieces.

Describe the physical building, staff structure, your day-to-day tasks and schedule.

The building has undergone many expansions since the NAWCC first began using it in the 1970s. The original building is now just one part of our museum exhibit space. The library and archives grew from one small room in the original building to its own wing today. The archival holdings are so vast we have additional archival storage in another part of the building. The archival collections and LARC are on the ground floor along with the museum, and the administrative offices of the NAWCC are upstairs. The NAWCC's School of Horology is across the street from us. The school offers workshops on all kinds of clocks and watches, a few of which I have taken to better understand the very things I am working with. On most days you can find me searching all corners of the library and archive for information to help answer questions. I blame my perfectionist attitude with research as the reason why I am rarely sitting at my desk. When you do find me sitting somewhere, it is because I am working on an archival collection, whether it's inventorying items or rehousing materials.

Finally, can you tell us why you do what you do?

History has always been important in my life. Whether it was sitting at the computer waiting for the dial-up internet to work so I could research the history behind something I saw on TV or reading mountains of books in my free time, I have always been fascinated by history. It did not matter what period of history it was, I simply wanted to learn it. Though I did not expect to end up in the world of horology, I find it quite interesting and exciting. I often hear from our members that you don't choose the horology life, you simply fall into it—and I'm very glad I did