

# The Joseph F. Kwapil Memorial Award

Presented by the News Division  
of the  
Special Libraries Association  
to

**John R. Cronin**

Chief Librarian of *The Boston Herald*

at

Belle Meade Plantation

Nashville, Tennessee

June 7, 2004

**Charles A. Campo, presenter**



## John R. Cronin: a brief vitae

Chief Librarian Boston Herald March 1976 to present

SLA member for almost 40 years

Attended first Newspaper Division meeting at the 1976 conference in Denver. Served Division admirably in numerous capacities, including the position of Chair in 1992.

Adjunct professor & visiting lecturer at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science. He presently serves on the peer evaluation review panel, and as an on-site visitor for the ALA Council on Accreditation of Library Schools.

John's lovely wife, Carol, is with us tonight and their son, Justin, is here representing himself and brothers Daniel and Christopher.

**Breaking news:**

National holiday declared...

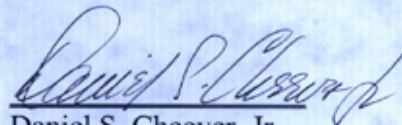
## PROCLAMATION

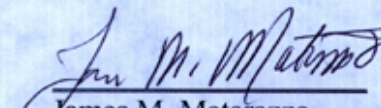
The President of Simmons College and  
the Dean Emeritus of the Graduate School of Library and  
Information Science  
have declared June 7, 2004 a National Holiday in  
recognition of the truly amazing career of

**JOHN R. CRONIN**  
**Chief Librarian at the Boston Herald**

Our students, alumni, staff, and faculty  
pause to wish you the very best  
on the occasion of your receiving the  
**JOSEPH F. KWAPIL MEMORIAL AWARD**  
**BY THE NEWS DIVISION OF SLA.**

Given this day  
May 5, 2004  
in Boston, Massachusetts, 2004.

  
Daniel S. Cheever, Jr.  
President

  
James M. Matarazzo  
Dean and Professor Emeritus

## A piece of intelligence from one of the News Division's "assets" in Boston:

I was walking through the Prudential Center last month during a lunch break and happened to run into John, who had just attended Mass at the chapel there, enjoying his day before his weekly night shift at the library. We were delighted at this chance happening, and we both had so much to say and very little time to spend but decided to make the most of it. He leaned over and whispered to me, as if anyone other than the two news librarians in that skyscraper would overhear or even know what we were talking about:

**"I got the Kwapil."**

I replied, "John!! CONGRATULATIONS!!! That is so fitting and thrilling, don't you have a little time? Let's celebrate. At least go out for a cup of chowder or something."

John stiffened and gave me a look. He said, "Come ON, [NAME REDACTED], you can do bettah than that.

Let's hear you say it:

CcCCHHeEEEEOOwwwDDDDAAHHHHHHH!!!!!"

(continued on next page)

I was reminded at this moment of the many reasons why I adore John. He's a very grounding, true, dyed-in-the-wool, real Bostonian that makes the Hub of the Universe what it is. He's a rock, and a treasure to his organization and our profession. In every sense of the term, he helps keep it real.

So, I placed my order"

"I'll have a cuppa cheowda, please."

To which John said:

"That's a little bettah."

Like me, I'm sure everyone learns something when they are with John.

I called Cronin a few weeks ago to check a few biographical facts. During our conversation he revealed that he recently had a dream about tonight's award banquet. All he could remember when he awoke was the very beginning of the presentation of his award. Here's how he related that vision to me:



# The Kwapiling

*A CofB production*



And he also mentioned something about it being a musical...



As you may imagine, I was, for once, at a loss for words. I mumbled a perfunctory, "Isn't that interesting", to John and rang off.

Didn't have a clue where to turn for interpretation of this vision, but I vaguely remembered that Liz Donovan had once mentioned an obscure site that she had found hidden deep in the invisible web links on Gary Price's ***Resource Shelf***.

So. I checked out the ***Online dictionary of future fantastic film facts***, and, sure enough, there was just what I needed.

When I saw the use of Kwapiling in a sentence and the accompanying illustration, I knew I was on the right track

**Kwapil** /ˈkwä p\_l/ vb: to present the distinguished Joseph F. Kwapil Memorial Award to a member of the SLA News Division. **Syn see ROAST, DUB**

**Kwapiling** /ˈkwa p\_lil/ n: One who has received the Kwapil award, *The ~ danced an Irish jig without spilling a drop of his Manhattan.*



# Joseph F. Kwapil Memorial Award

This award, the highest recognition of the Division, is given for major achievement in the field of news librarianship and outstanding service to the News Division. The recipient has usually actively participated in the Division's programs and projects for a continuous period of ten years.



Joseph F. Kwapil



Kwapiling Cronin with centerpiece

For help in creating this extravaganza, I turned to the one resource that has never failed me...my colleagues in the News Division. More than 50 members have contributed to a commemorative portfolio of letters for John. Here is a sampling of comments from those letters, arranged in various categories beginning with...



Epistles to Saint John



... my favorite memory of John doesn't [involve] humor or partying, but was the essence of true friendship. When I attended the conference in Cincinnati in June 1993, I had just completed 4 months of intensive chemotherapy for breast cancer. I was sick and I should have stayed home, but it was my reward to myself for the previous four months. John ... watched over me with a care that probably went unnoticed by everyone except me. I knew John was only a phone call away and would get me home somehow.

**Bridget**

I especially remember your kindness in welcoming my family when I brought them to the Boston conference, and that in subsequent years you always asked after them. And when my former roommate became president of the Boston chapter of NOW, you tried to put us back in touch with each other. It's that kind of interest in others, that willingness to help, that I think of as one of your outstanding qualities. That, and your smile - whenever I think of you, John, I see you smiling.

**Elyse**

...But most of all, I remember John for when I left the news business. Layoffs can be challenging, and as I informed old colleagues about my departure, John's email response touched me. "I know you'll get beyond this," he wrote, "because the same thing happened to me and I did." I was so grateful to John for sharing his experience and giving encouragement in such simple yet powerful terms. And John was right, too: there is life *outside* of news. But tonight, you should all be celebrating a vibrant career lived *inside* the News business, the illustrious career of John Cronin: gentleman, scholar, and friend.

**John**

I was very excited at the 1986 conference in Boston because I was to get the Henebry. Well, I passed out on Prudential Plaza, woke up in Beth Israel Hospital, passed out again, woke up with a pacemaker, flew home never having made it to a single meeting. I don't know whether to blame John, or thank him for the apologetic note he sent me. That pacemaker lasted 18 years and was the medical wonder of Bay Area cardiologists for many years. Probably John had something to do with that TOO.

**Barbara**

Actually, you are a grand testament to the profession. You are also a testament to longevity. And a testament to loyalty. A testament to faithfulness - and a testament to good humor. I think the division should hail you as the “Old Testament” - a pretty good nickname for a red-haired Irish Catholic boy.

**Rich**



Mentoring memos

I believe John's most important contribution to the Division is his innate skill as a mentor. He does it so well that he has set a standard. John welcomed me to my first conference, in San Francisco, in 1992. He embraced, introduced, sought out, squired, taught and tended to me as if I were his personal responsibility. I didn't realize then that his welcome to me is the norm for him. In just one week, he showed me that the major value of SLA membership is the support we give to one another.

**Ginny H.**

Nothing is worse than attending your first conference without a mentor and you have helped the way for many to have a wonderful experience.

**Diane**

Your contribution to the news division that stands out for me, though, is your ability to make the first timers and occasional conference attendees feel welcome.

**Bill**





I shall never forget the kindness and inclusiveness you showed a "newbie".

**Dorothy**

You are a wonderful mentor and thoughtful advisor to scores of news librarians... You have calmed us during tornadoes, scared us with health troubles and amused us with 'CofB seeks succor' emails. It is only fitting that your cadre of loyal fans are honoring you at this time.

**Elaine**

The fact you have welcomed, advised, taught, led, encouraged and befriended dozens of people ... is the kind of outstanding service the Kwapil Award represents.

**Chris**



I've been thinking about you and this award. I have no idea what the award is for but I know it's important and it's nice they are giving you one. ... To me, you are a warm presence, reassuring, almost like a dear uncle. You really care for the News Division, you are very honest and sincere and I believe your support for first timers is something very important, ... one factor that makes the Division so successful... **Laura**

His humorous posts have always added something to NewsLib. They remind us of the smiling face of the Cronin of Boston we have seen at past conferences and the thoughts of seeing him again at the upcoming conference. He is always full of encouraging words. **Carolyn**



What a delight it is to send my first "Dear John" letter to such a sweetheart of a man. Congratulations on receiving the News Division's Kwapil Award. I believe it is reward for your ability to capture the essence of the Division and turn it into a work of the heart.

**Mona**

Dear John:

I just realized all your letters are "Dear John" letters. Even the letter announcing you had won the prestigious Kwapil award was a "Dear John" letter. And really the traditional separation implied by a "Dear John" letter was present. It puts you in a group of elite few extraordinary news researchers.

**Jill**



Auld Friends

I have always harbored a secret resentment at your unalloyed enjoyment at these conventions. The gods always seem to smile on you. **Ben**

If people leave a conference with no one talking to them, remembering their name, and generally showing interest, they won't be committed to giving back. People remember "Cronin of Boston" not just because it's catchy, but because "Cronin of Boston" remembers them and cares about them.

**Catherine**







As a fellow CUA grad I enjoyed our recollections of the "dear alma mater." In particular, I recall mutual friendships we shared. Especially, the guidance of dear "Father K" who encouraged both of us in our career development. Cherished memories of laughs with witty Father Bernard in the "Dugout" are times we cannot forget. ...Congratulations, John, on your personal success as the News Division's brightest star!!

**Kitty**





When I returned to the ... news library after ten years of doing other newspaperly things, I called several of the News Division icons. Of course John Cronin was one of them. I asked: "John, what's been happening in the news library business in the last ten years?" I thought he'd never stop laughing. When he did, he said, "Oh, everything." Then we had a really good, long visit and he helped ease me back into the fray.

**Carol**













Madcap missives

I'd like to thank John for helping provide the absolute classiest cocktail party in the Division's history. It was at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, a relocated Venetian palace of amazing splendor.

As we sipped wine on a perfect evening in June 1986, string players from the symphony serenaded us from the balconies overlooking the exquisite, grass-covered, formal Italian courtyard. It was Boston at it's best.

Come to think of it, we can say the same for Cronin of Boston himself!

**Lany**

...Neither did he shy away from the Newspaper Division tradition and responsibility for just plain ol' Having Fun. I also owe to him one of the better moments of my aesthetic experience. During a Special Libraries Association conference in Boston, in his role as a site host, John arranged a memorable afternoon and evening for us at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

**Ernest**





Ask Carol if he ever adequately explained finding a pair of my outlandish "hooker" shoes in his baggage when he returned home from a conference.

**Lany**

In such exotic places as Worcester and Pittsburgh, you were more than happy to help to indoctrinate the "kid". In fact, I think you were instrumental in almost getting us rubbed out at a mobbed up place in the Steel City. I understand that you come from a place where the Irish ran the mob and so might not have grasped the subtleties of Sicilian etiquette. But when the maitre d' is wearing a piece, discretion is ALWAYS the better part of valor.

**Linda**





I have the senior privilege as a venerable Wise Man of advising you that you have “done good”, indeed, preserving our traditions of excellence and advancing our professionalism while partying with the best of them in our renowned “Animal House” of the SLA.

**Jim**

...we all need a sense of humor ... and I have seen that good trait bubbling up through the years of conference. (Were you part of the Denver dinner group that was in the wrong lane asking a cop for driving directions to a tropical cliff divers' restaurant?)

**Lois**

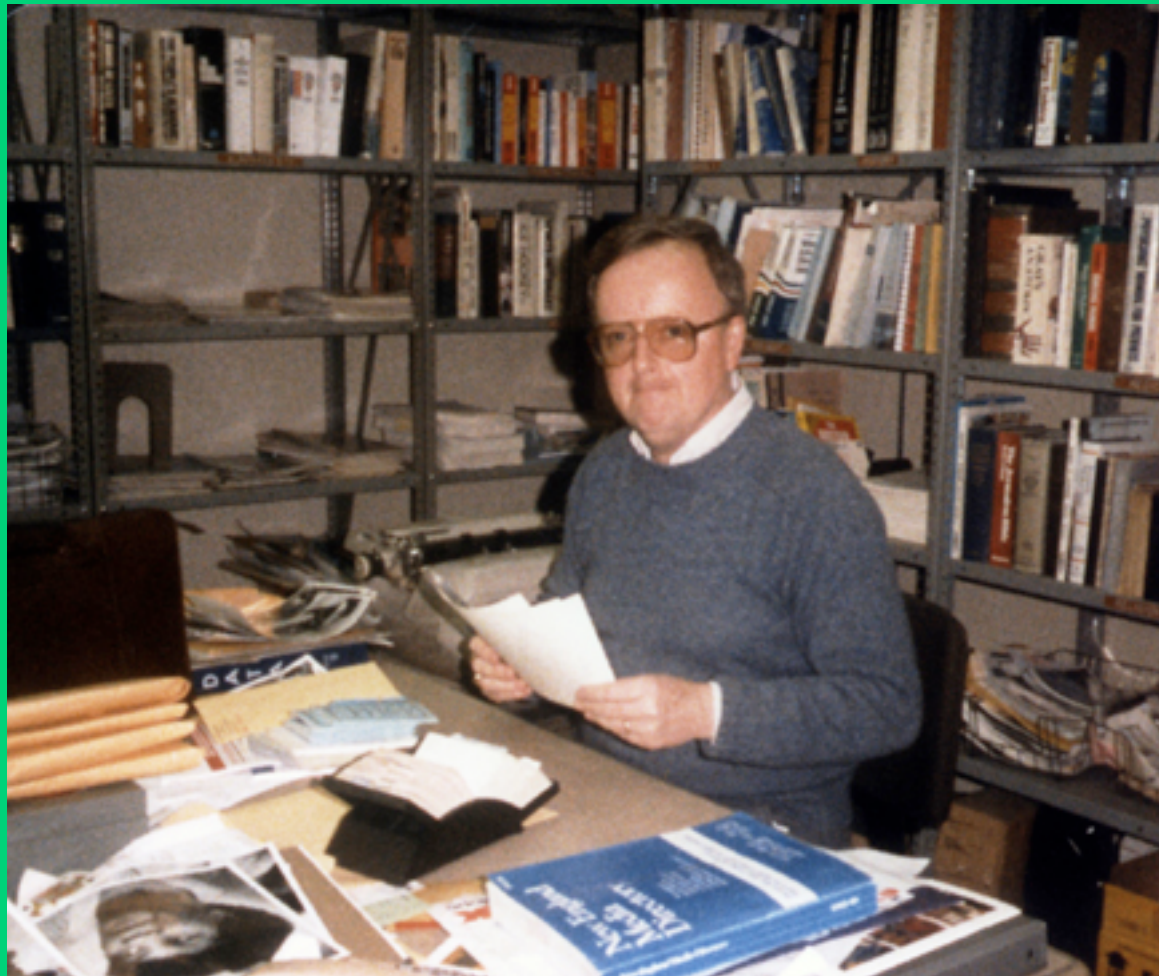
This is a time to get seriously mushy: your warm, sweet, friendly, intelligent, funny, clever, knowledgeable, unflappable, generous, helpful personality is a major reason that the News Division is such a wonderful organization ... From the moment I met you - too many years ago to say - I've considered it a privilege to know you and share your profession.

**Kee**









In the age before the Internet, when news sharing was not so simple, we always put aside the rivalries between our two newspapers to help each other out. Each of our wonderful archives sometimes had just what the person needed, and, damn it, the only way we could get it was to call one another! And so we did.

**Lisa**

You've presided over some amazing changes, both here at the *Herald* and in the profession as a whole...The changes you wrought here, despite stiff resistance from newsroom traditionalists and front-office bean counters have been nothing short of breathtaking. You should justly be proud of your achievements....Boss, it's been an honor and a privilege to work for you and with you. The Kwapil is well-deserved and overdue. Congratulations, Dr. Cronin.

**Al**



Dear John:

Congratulations on being named the recipient of the Joseph F. Kwapil Memorial Award.

If there ever was a “go to” guy at the Herald, you are the man. Countless times I have prevailed upon you: how does one address our distinguished visitor? Will you get me a detailed corporate history - in five minutes? Was it Nathan Hale - or Nathaniel - who established our cousin *The Daily Advertiser* in 1813?

From the arcane to the mundane, nothing seems to fluster you, and for that you have my sincere admiration. Maureen and I thank you for all that you do for everyone at the Boston Herald.

Enjoy your special evening, John.

Patrick J. Purcell [publisher, The Boston Herald]



**Please join  
with me in  
offering an  
old Irish  
blessing to  
John, as he  
comes up to  
receive his  
Kwapil.**

**May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your  
face; the rains fall soft upon your fields;  
and, until we meet again,  
may God hold you in the palm of His  
hand.**

