Interviewing a WPI Faculty Member and Beginning Your Research
Due Sept. 11

Please choose a WPI faculty member whose discipline interests you. This could be a professor in your major or someone you’ve come to know, or someone whose discipline you want to learn more about. You may need to talk to several people before you find someone who knows the history of his or her discipline well. Your goal is to begin collecting ideas and resources that will help you develop a character and/or a debate or conflict that you can incorporate into our game.

Be sure to take good notes and allow an hour for your interview. You’ll want to ask good, open-ended questions about the discipline in 1899. It helps to come with a list of questions, but you’ll also want to listen carefully so as to ask follow-up questions that might not be on your list.

It will also help to do a bit of research about the discipline before you draw up your questions. Although online encyclopedias (including Wikipedia) aren’t the best ultimate sources for research, they are great places to start when you want a general overview that will inform you of what questions to ask.

During the interview you should also ask for more reference sources. What are the best books (for a specialist or general reader) about the history of this discipline or profession?

After the interview you’ll need to write up your findings. This can take the form of Question and Answer if you like, or simply a summary of the conversation. Direct quotations aren’t necessary, but try to preserve the details of the conversation rather than just a general overview. For instance:

Prof. Levesque said that the building now called Atwater Kent was built as an electricity shop, where students worked on electric streetcars that entered the building through the big open bays. The building now known as Skull Tomb was built as a laboratory for electrical experiments but had to be abandoned for that purpose when the vibrations of Worcester’s new electric cars interfered with their experiments. By 1899 the controversy between direct current and alternating current had been settled in favor of alternating current.

You could also put your findings in the form of a bulleted list, but remember to preserve as many details as you can. I’m less concerned about format than about getting down some good details that will spur you on to deeper research.

Next, do a bit more research into the areas covered by the interview. Come up with some historical events that touch on the information you learned from your interview. Think of some characters (either actual particular characters or types, such as a streetcar electrician or driver in Worcester) you might include in the game. What might their roles be? Try to identify and focus on a controversy within the discipline or profession.

Finally, search the online catalog of the American Antiquarian Society to find 1 or 2 sources relevant to what you learned in your interview. It might be a newspaper or map from the period. It might be a professional journal or article. It might be a photograph of a person you’d like to use for your character role.

What you’ll hand in on Sept. 11:
1. Write-up of your interview
2. List or outline of (2-3) possible historical events to go along with what you’ve learned
3. List of possible characters relevant to what you’ve learned
4. List of possible sources to view at the AAS

Also, prior to Sept. 11, sign up for an account at the AAS and request at least one (more if possible) of the items mentioned in #4 above. You will have a chance to view these when our class meets at the AAS on Sept. 11.