

An award-winning journalist and broadcaster, Mara Tapp has long demonstrated expertise in and love of the arts and culture and journalism, and is experienced in blending the two. In her more than 30 years as a practicing journalist, Tapp has worked for radio, television and print.

Major articles on and Q&As with Stuart Dybek, Kerry James Marshall, Robert Falls, Frank Galati, Aleksandar Hemon, Moises Kaufman, Charles Newell, Alex Polikoff and Wu Hung have appeared in *Catalyst*, *Bookforum*, *Chicago magazine*, *the Chicago Reader*, *the Chicago Sun-Times*, *the Chicago Tribune*, *Mother Jones*, *New Art Examiner*, *Playbill*, *Stagebill* and *Student Lawyer*.

Tapp started reporting on the arts for public radio in 1980 as a freelancer and continued in various capacities through 1998.

From 1990 to 1997 Tapp hosted *The Mara Tapp Show* – an eclectic mix of public affairs, author interviews, and coverage of the culinary, literary and visual arts; music, theater, culture, education, medicine and legal affairs – on WBEZ, Chicago’s National Public Radio affiliate. While there, Tapp helped create “Live at the Library” – a series of interviews with authors and important contributors to our culture – with the Chicago Public Library. Guests included Isabel Allende, the late Art Buchwald, Jamaica Kincaid, Robert Pinsky, Calvin Trillin and Edwidge Danticat.

*Talking Books with Mara Tapp* aired on WFMT in May 2004. *Cover to Cover with Mara Tapp* aired on a Chicago-based PBS station in the spring of 2003.

Tapp’s public author interviews are extensive. She interviewed Joan Didion for the 2005 Chicago Humanities Festival. Other notable public interviews include her conversation with Kurt Vonnegut when he won the 2001 Chicago Public Library Foundation’s Carl Sandburg Literary Award, and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, whose book *Night* was the spring 2002 selection for the city-wide “One Book, One Chicago” reading initiative.

Tapp spent two years as host and executive producer of *Conversations from Wingspread*, which aired on Wisconsin public radio stations and on some 50 public access television stations around the country. As part of her programming there, she instituted a writers series that included Jane Hamilton, the late Studs Terkel,

the late Grace Paley, Susan Faludi and the late Senator Paul Simon. Among her six miniseries was one on “The Future of the Book.”

She served as features editor of *Sullivan’s Review*, managing editor of *Merrill’s Illinois Legal Times* and was the first press secretary to the City of Chicago’s Law Department during the term of the late Mayor Harold Washington. While in graduate school, Tapp served as poetry co-editor for the *Chicago Review* and instituted a speakers series bringing poets from around the country to read in Chicago. She has an A.M. in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago and an M.S.J. from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

In 2004, Tapp added teaching to her professional activities and spent 15 years as a substitute teacher for the Chicago Public Schools, including the one where her own children began their formal education. She also taught students in the graduate program for New Arts Journalism at the School of the Art Institute and upper-level undergraduates at Columbia College Chicago how to think and write critically about a wide range of arts and culture.

Tapp is honored to have been recruited by the late Irving B. Harris to serve as a mentor at the Harris School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago, which she did for 25 years.

In 2008, Tapp designed and now runs *Cool Classics!*, an award-winning, nationally recognized after-school program that uses art-integrated, diversity-driven curricula to promote literacy, teach critical thinking and introduce Chicago public elementary school children in underserved communities to the arts and humanities.

*Cool Classics!* was honored as one of 12 winners of the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. The award was given by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, in cooperation with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. The award recognized the country’s best creative youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to generate a wide range of positive outcomes. The awardees—chosen from a pool of 350 nominations and 50 finalists—were also recognized for

improving literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness.