Waldo Library in 2001
By Dan Marmion

[Daniel K. Marmion joined the staff of the University Libraries in October 1995 as Assistant Dean for Library Technology and Systems. He holds a B.A. and M.L.S. from the University of North Texas, Denton. His most recent position was Head, Library Systems, at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, where he was instrumental in “automating the library from scratch”]

Imagine, if you would, that the year is 2001, and you, a 1996 graduate of WMU, are returning to the campus to pursue a graduate degree. Five years have passed since you visited the campus, and there are numerous changes. Your interest in communication and information retrieval makes one of your first priorities a visit to the impressive library/computer complex that was originally dedicated in 1992. As you enter the majestic atrium of Waldo Library, your eyes, once again, are caught and follow the structural flow of three stories rising to the windowed apex. Straight ahead, rows of books recede into the distance, but, as you leave the marbled rotunda, your attention is immediately drawn to a different set of rows. There, to your right, is a unique array of computer workstations that capture attention because they have little similarity to the “dumb” terminals that you recall from undergraduate days.

Thinking back to those earlier college years, you recall the drab groups of computers scattered about the library in somewhat erratic placement. Each was marked with a sign to indicate its respective purpose. For the most part, the terminals were archaic, slow, non-graphical, non-colorful, and non-intuitive. In order to access the library’s online catalog, or any of the available periodical indices, every user had to type such arcane commands as “P1” or “P2.” Then, there would be a series of steps, steps that occasionally changed from semester to semester, that allowed the searcher to make a selection from a complex menu structure. And, if you were not at the right computer for online catalog access, a different set of commands would be displayed that were apt to lead you into a further maze of confusing search strategies. All in all, you tended to have a rather negative image of how to locate information or resources in the University Libraries. More than that, you still didn’t have the actual information in most cases—just a citation or reference to a location.

Fortunately, not everything was difficult or dull or unrewarding. The library did have a few Internet terminals that were made available just before you graduated. They were fun, but, in those days, the “information superhighway” was heavily congested, and there were few clear roadmaps and, even worse, not even some basic road signs. In fact, despite all the publicity, the time you could spend “surfing,” and the intriguing places that you found yourself, you also felt that finding specific information on the World Wide Web was more or less “hit or miss” with a spider lurking around certain dark corners.

However, that was then, and it’s now five years later—a new century and a new look to Waldo Library. When you approach the new computers, the first thing that you see is that they are colorful, contain graphics of all kinds, and, when you play with them, they are fast. Chances are they will be the most recent
version of the INtel-based Septiums running Windows 2K, the operating system from Microsoft that replaced Windows 99. As much as possible, every workstation is state of the art, and the differences in access are amazing.

First, and delightfully, the baneful presence of the "P1" and "P2" has been removed. Now, it is "point and click"! Do you only want the library's catalog? Just click on the icon (image) for Finder, WMU's catalog. Need to search a periodical index such as ERIC or INFO. Now there are dozens readily available, each with its own specific icon. At every step, there is the possibility of asking for HELP in case you don't know what is found in a given file/index or how to search it. The system design includes some standard Windows (guides) with hypertext (click and jump) links that will assist you in choosing the right file/index to search. Oh, by the way, the numerous files/indexes/databases are actually located all over the world. A few may be physically located at Western Michigan University, but the vast majority are not. Actually, back in 1996, the reason why it was so hard to get to a file or index was because the operating systems then in existence required a series of sequential steps for access; each file or index had a slightly different technological approach that had to be followed in order to be recognized by its peculiar system. By 2001, that barrier to easy communication has been breached and a simple "click of the mouse" system permits the searcher to access quickly whatever he or she wishes to review.

Another, much-desired improvement is that the "interface" is now truly a common one—each of the files or databases can be searched using the same vocabulary and commands. Thus, the workstations are much more intuitive and facilitate the user's movement from one file to another since each new file does not require knowledge of a disparate set of commands or a special vocabulary. Speaking of interfaces, do you notice how the library applications—the catalog and the citation databases—have the same look and feel as the World Wide Web? It's true. They are, in fact, Web applications. Almost all libraries use this technology as we move into the twenty-first century. With that technology and a special international standard for the transmission of information (a thing called Z39.50), the files of many libraries can be accessed, as well as hundreds of other information providers, via your favorite WWW browser. Not only is this easier for you, the user, but system technicians and developers no longer have to depend on particular kinds of terminal emulation software. In addition, we who function as today's librarians and information managers have been able to develop something called "platform-independent applications." In other words, it doesn't matter whether you prefer a Mac or a Sun or a PC or whatever. As long as you have a viable Web browser, you become a player/participant.

At this point in your stroll through Waldo Library, something else dawns in your consciousness. Not only have you been jumping around, with considerable ease, from one file or database or index to another, but, once a citation or piece of information is located, you have the option of obtaining a copy of the full text or the chart or picture that is referenced on the screen. This undoubtedly strikes you as the greatest timesaver in your entire lifetime since you no longer have to scour the isles and shelves to locate a volume or a journal or magazine article. "Eureka," you shout, and notice that not a soul looks up as you dance a jig out the door with copies of several documents in hand. Now, indeed, you are looking forward to graduate study ably assisted by an information service that allows you to spend your time analyzing, learning, and critiquing the material rather than finding it. The millennium has arrived.

"There is, I fancy, a kind of book which certainly influences the world directly, and, it may be truly said, is an original cause to the effect it creates. It is not the book which merely expresses what its audience was already feeling in a confused fashion, nor the book which fires enthusiasm by rhetoric; but the book which tells clearly the discovery of some truth, giving positive evidence for same."

—Hilaire Belloc

A Conversation with an Angel

A Special Gift

In 1967, Mrs. Harriet Keith and her late husband, The Reverend William Keith, visited Oxford, England. While her husband attended lectures at the University, Mrs. Keith visited the cemeteries of various churches located nearby and made rubbings of the magnificent medieval brass headstones. In February of 1995, she donated seven hangings to the Rare Book Room in Waldo Library; three of them are now displayed on the walls of the room. In September, last year, Mrs. Keith visited the library to view the exhibit.

The University Libraries is pleased to have received this unusual addition to its collection.

Mrs. Harriet Keith: Headstone Rubbings
The Man from Boston
A Friends’ Personality

Where do one’s formative years begin and end? For Martin Cohen, it all starts with the fine education that he received in Boston—the heart of much of the culture, history, and tradition of these United States. Martin was able to attend the three oldest schools in New England—Cotton Mather Elementary (founded in 1628), Boston Latin School (dating back to 1630), and, ultimately, the Harvard University, which was the first of the colleges open in the colonies—in 1636. From such roots came a lifetime dedicated to education, although his first teaching experiences in a local school (after earning an M.A. at the Boston Teachers College) did not seem to offer what he would later embrace with enthusiasm. As far as an end, well, read further.

As a partial escape from his first teaching experiences, Cohen, in May of 1940, joined the Massachusetts National Guard. In September of that same year, harkening to the war clouds threatening Europe and the Far East, national guard units were federalized, and this well-educated young teacher became an enlisted soldier in an artillery unit of the U.S. Army. After one rejection for Officers Candidate School due to his poor eyesight, he reapplied in a different specialization, transportation, and was sent to Mississippi for training. Some ninety days later, 2nd Lieutenant Cohen was reassigned to a Brooklyn army base. In May of 1943, he and 1,700 other GI’s were sailing for Scotland aboard the Queen Elizabeth I which, despite the many sinkings then occurring because of U-boat attacks, survived the journey.

In England, Martin worked diligently as a railroad station manager at North Hampton, a supply point for the surrounding ring of 8th Air Force bases. Fortunately, he was billeted with an elderly couple who treated him as a son. He, in turn, was able to share rations such as coffee and sugar that were in short supply in war-torn Britain. With the taking of Cherbourg, many troops were moved to the continent, Martin along with them to serve as “real estate officer” for the Cherbourg area. His major responsibility was to find locations for all of the supplies that were flooding into the area to support the liberation of Europe. He utilized his education to review the ancient plat books that dated back to Napoleon in order to discover who owned a building or a piece of land and thereby insure that the space could be used by the armed forces.

Another major assignment came when he was sent as Port Landing Officer to Le Havre which, by that time, had been almost leveled by the military battles and bombings. Regardless, the port was one of the principal Allied supply stations, and the future educator’s role was to find berthing space for the myriad numbers of ships and vessels that brought immense amounts of supplies to the area. Unfortunately, his eyesight began to cause major difficulties and he was sent to a hospital in Paris, and was there when the city celebrated its liberation. A short time later, he was given a medical discharge and returned to Boston in November of 1945.

Although, in one sense, Professor Cohen felt that he had almost lived a lifetime, he was still a young man with a long life ahead. He turned, propitiously, to a new career, and selected, as his training base, the library school found at Simmons College in Boston. There, in 1946, he was the first male student to be admitted to their advanced library education program. From Simmons, it was a short step into a reference career in the public libraries (the “universities of the people”) of Newark, NJ, Decatur, IL, and Kalamazoo, MI. For anyone who knows anything about library history, these three libraries are especially noted for their superior library programs, state-of-the-art technology, and community commitment. Martin also married and his son and daughter were born during this period.

A new stage in his career as an information specialist and educator/librarian began in 1960 when he began teaching in the Humanities Division of the then nationally recognized College of General Studies at Western Michigan University. One unique sideline to his library and teaching was his involvement with the Midwest Project on Airborne Telephone Instruction (MPATI). In this short-lived, but creative project, a DC-6 would fly

G.E.
The library system at Western Michigan University receives a higher percentage of General Fund dollars than any other state university in Michigan. Currently, over 4.5% is allocated to the University Libraries, the average in Michigan is 3.64%. WMU believes that its library system is a top priority and basic to its mission. The total expenditure for collections in 1993-94 was $2,305,903. As a result, the University Libraries is the fourth in size and diversity in Michigan; it holds 3,205,619 titles.

The University Libraries, in 1994-95, received 5,533 periodical subscriptions. The library catalog, Finder, identifies these titles as "serials"; users access them through 1,387 databases found in a variety of formats from paper to microforms to CD-roms to online systems. If the material is not available in the Libraries' collections, the Resource Sharing Office will obtain the material within a few days. Last year the Office processed over 12,800 requests for students, faculty, and staff.

An approval plan that is based on the needs of current undergraduate and graduate curricula automatically supplies 52% of the books and monographs added each year. The remaining 48% come from faculty and staff requests as well as gifts. In 1994-95, $787,164 was spent on new books. Moreover, that year saw the acquisition of more books than in any previous year in the Libraries' history.

The University Libraries has its own home page on the Web. To discover even more about the amazing University Libraries, access http://www.w.mich.edu/library.

Our Amazing Libraries

Most individuals who come to the University Libraries or to the University as a whole are largely unaware of the unique resources, opportunities and collections that constitute the entity called the University Libraries—Waldo, the main building, and three branches: Music and Dance, Education, and Regional History and Archives. So, to pique your curiosity, a selection of facts about the University Libraries is presented.

The Library Faculty and staff provide hundreds of informational/instructional presentations to University classes and other constituent users each year. Recent data indicate that only the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, provides more opportunities to achieve information literacy than the University Libraries. Nearly 8,000 users attended sessions and workshops in any recent year. Thousands more have received individualized instruction or learned research techniques through a hypermedia tutorial found in Waldo.

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Saving the Book

When the binding on a 12th century manuscript threatens to crumble into dust, what does the one do? This is not an easy question for even the most experienced rare book librarian to answer. Regardless, an answer had to be found when the earliest manuscript in the rare Cistercian Collection, located in the vault of the Rare Book area in Waldo Library, began to disintegrate. The irreplaceable vellum leaves were beginning to separate from the binding, and the support boards for the binding were now showing through the covers.

Anyone involved in the preservation of rare books knows that repairing any medieval manuscript is difficult, but an added concern developed when the earliest manuscript in the rare Cistercian Collection, located in the vault of the Rare Book area in Waldo Library, began to disintegrate. The irreplaceable vellum leaves were beginning to separate from the binding, and the support boards for the binding were now showing through the covers.

The early medieval musical notation found in the disintegrating volume had been created by medieval monks; it is a Cistercian antiphonary, a book containing the choral parts of the breviary. The early medieval musical notation was hand delivered to the Ann Arbor center. Conservator Craven did a careful study of the manuscript scrupulously noting the construction of the previous binding—only then did he take it apart—with great care. His next step was to repair, meticulously, the spines of the damaged folios (folded vellum leaves). Craven then reassembled the quires (four folios), and, using his invaluable personal expertise, rebound the book in a beautiful but austere brown leather. Finally, in order to provide additional protection, he built a compartment for the entire manuscript volume. A special compartment protects the replaced, probably early 19th century, binding. Also included for future historians and medievalists is a dated description of what had been done to restore the 12th century manuscript.

This was not, as one would guess from the description, a quick and easy task to complete. Indeed, the entire rebinding process took place over a period of two years. However, such time and care were well worth the effort and cost. While working on the manuscript, Mr. Craven was able to examine the various pinpricks that could still be seen on the folios of the manuscript pages. From these pinpricks, he concluded that his work constituted the fourth binding in the centuries-long existence of the antiphonary. As one might thoughtfully say, “not bad for a manuscript whose marginal notes reveal that it was copied out sometime before 1174.”

Author Salman Rushdie recalls a treasured family tradition:

“In our house, whenever anyone dropped a book, it was required to be not only picked up but also kissed, by way of apology for the act of clumsy disrespect. I was as careless and butterfingered as any child, and accordingly I kissed a large number of books.

“Devout households in India still contain persons in the habit of kissing holy books. But we kissed everything. We kissed dictionaries and atlases. We kissed novels and Superman comics. If I’d ever dropped a telephone directory, I’d probably have kissed that too.

“All this happened before I had ever kissed a girl. In fact, once I started kissing girls, my activities with regard to books lost some of their special excitement. But one never forgets one’s first loves.”

—Salman Rushdie

Imaginary Homelands

Gatherings

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Gatherings is published triannually by the Friends of the University Libraries, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, 49008-5080. Contributors to this issue include: Beatrice Beech, Emerita Rare Book/Cistercian Professor; Gordon Eriksen, Emeritus Reference Professor; Dan Marmion, Assistant Dean for Library Technology and Systems; and Bettina Meyer, Assistant Dean for Resources.

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Come Home to Waldo and the Internet

Dean Lance Query, University Libraries, has extended an invitation to the emeriti faculty of the University Libraries, the emeriti faculty of the School of Library and Information Science at Western Michigan University, and the alumni of the School, which graduated hundreds of information specialists from 1946 to 1985, to revisit the "halls of yesteryear" that are now encompassed within the magnificent new library/computer complex dedicated in 1992. Dean Query sponsored a similar reunion in July of 1995, and was delighted at the response of the community to the invitation to tour the modern library facility and learn about its many computerized search systems.

As Dr. Query has noted, "We have many good friends of the University who are out of touch with our services and resources. All too often, they have planned to return and visit, but simply haven’t had the right opportunity. We want to provide that opportunity, and ‘brag’ a bit about what we have, what we can do, and our dreams for the future.”

The homecoming day is scheduled for Saturday, June 1, 1996, from 10:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m. A special Internet session taught by three library faculty, David Isaacson, Linda Rolls, and Dennis Strasser, will introduce visitors to such basics as "What Equipment Do I Need to Access the World Wide Web" and introductory search techniques to the Web and its nearly unlimited number of resources. The faculty will utilize the state-of-the-art electronic classroom found in Waldo to demonstrate the multimedia Internet sites, and then let those who wish do hands-on "surfing of the Net." In addition, lunch is provided and guided tours of Waldo, the Education Library, and the campus will be available.

If you would like to attend and have not received an invitation, please call (616) 387-5202 and make a reservation before May 24th.

"The greatest book is not the one whose message engraves itself on the brain...but the one whose vital impact opens up other viewpoints, and from the writer to reader spreads the fire that is fed by the various essences, until it becomes a vast conflagration leaping from forest to forest.”

—Romain Rolland
Journey Within

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