WestCat: A New Generation

By Lance Query

On July 31, 1998, the University Libraries at Western Michigan University stepped into the 21st century. Finder, the Libraries’ first online catalog, which dates back to 1989, was replaced by a new state-of-the-art system located, for most users, in an Internet environment. Although, at first, the user may not perceive the unique aspects of WestCat—a new name for a new resource—a small amount of experimentation will demonstrate that the role of the library catalog has changed dramatically.

Historically, the primary purposes of a library’s catalog were simple and straightforward. First and foremost, it served as a finding aid for the books, periodicals, newspapers, special collections, documents, multi-media, and other resources that were located in that particular library. Behind the scenes, it was the major way to provide inventory control for the collection. In reality, even the most elaborate institutional catalog never really met its primary role of “cataloging” the library. All kinds of resources including maps, photographs, manuscripts, pamphlet and clipping files, many government publications, reference guides, and a host of other resources that were located in that particular library. Behind the scenes, it was the major way to provide inventory control for the collection. In reality, even the most elaborate institutional catalog never really met its primary role of “cataloging” the library. All kinds of resources including maps, photographs, manuscripts, pamphlet and clipping files, many government publications, reference guides, and a host of other resources were excluded or, on occasion, found in a separate listing. And, of course, no institution thought seriously about referencing or indexing materials outside of the collection that it owned.

Today, as remotely accessible electronic resources increase in number, importance, and reliability, academic library catalogs are becoming a part of a network of access tools—and to the publications themselves. The ability of Web-based catalogs to link local, building-specific collections to an unlimited number of resources found elsewhere is now a part of the system found in the University Libraries at Western Michigan University. WestCat, our OPAC (online public access catalog), has replaced Finder. We now are able to provide access not only to Western Michigan University collections, but to the almost infinite world of cyberspace.

A number of companies have become leaders in the field of integrated library and information management systems. The most successful in the relatively short history of this emerging technology is the Endeavor Information Systems Incorporated, located in Rosemont, Illinois. Their software, Voyager, is especially designed for academic libraries. It recognizes the need for the library to serve as “the center of campus information networks, providing access to worldwide research resources, and assuming responsibility for information delivery.” (Voyager: A Technical Overview of the Library and Information Management System for Today’s Networked World, Rosemont, IL: Endeavor Information Systems Incorporated, n.d., p. 1)

After three years of intensive review of several major contenders in the field of information management, Western Michigan University developed a five year transitional plan to implement the Voyager system, budgeted at $5,000,000, that would incorporate client/server architecture; support the known standards or protocols for systems interconnectivity (e.g., Z39.50, USMARC, TCP/IP); build on UNIX® and Microsoft® Windows® technology, and as part and parcel, employ a graphical user interface (GUI) that, in essence, allows the user to move easily from module to module. All of this technological jargon can be simply translated: WestCat will provide more access to the University’s collections, and, as the system is fully implemented, users will have direct access to electronic resources that we do not own. The term often used for this is “hotlink.” For some, it is simply translated as “clicking” on the highlighted terms or opening well-placed icons. Instantaneously, the screen reflects the hotlink home—another catalog, a source to contact, or the full data/information itself.

The full-text Internet response changes, in an essential way, the concept of library ownership. The Internet’s inclusion of electronic journals and other publications has created a significant information resource. This external “library without walls” will be used whether libraries choose to organize the materials or not. Unfortunately, when users access the Internet, they find that search features are primitive, usually relying on free-text searching. Almost never is there a controlled vocabulary or field searching. Because of this fact, libraries are taking on the role of organizing and managing the Internet. This can be done when an OPAC is Web-based since the hotlinks can point to the full-text resources found on the WWW.

And, herein lies to major challenge to the University Libraries. Library hotlinks do not come into being without some human establishing the connection. Make no mistake about it: providing hotlinks,
A Picture is Worth... Part 2
By Miranda Howard Haddock

What do original programs from the 1936 Berlin Olympics; pictures of Quonset huts; booklets of Roman letter styles; book illustrations by N.C. Wyeth; photographs of Uppsala Cathedral, Sweden; and details of Hans Holbein’s artistic treatment of the human hand have in common? In this instance, the common factor is location. All of these items and many more can be found in the Visual Resources Library in Sangren Hall. Readers of the first part of “A Picture is Worth—a Thousand Uses” (Gatherings, Winter, 1998, pp. 1, 6) will recall that the focus was the University Libraries’ slide collection. However, visual resources libraries are not just for slides!

Surely, everyone has noticed how much more visually acute everyone is in this day and age. The omnipresence of motion picture films, videos, television, the World Wide Web, and other graphic representations dominate society as we know it. Moreover, the technical quality of these media are uniquely more sophisticated. Compare, for example, the visual stimulation in an older TV series such as I Love Lucy to a recent episode of The Nanny, or the special effects in A Night to Remember to Titanic. Even the sets of TV’s game and talk shows attempt to dazzle the visual senses. Think back to the simplistic sets of What’s My Line or Jack Paar’s late evening talk show, and note the assault on the ocular senses found in Wheel of Fortune and The Jerry Springer Show. Advertising signs on businesses and road sides are far more elaborate and eye-catching than just a few years ago. Corporations depend on striking logos to give singular recognition to their products. Even letterheads are designed to attract the eye and gain attention. Everyone is seeing more; almost everything is visually accessible.

This contemporary emphasis on the graphic and visual has had a major influence on educational institutions. Although no classroom instructor has to upstage Oprah or a major disaster, students demand more than a lecture and blackboard scrawls. A key mission of the Visual Resources Library is to assist members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students, in their presentations. Building on its extensive foundation of slides, the VRL offers other services ranging from low to high on the technological/graphical spectrum. Specifically, services include a vast picture depository and special help in locating images useful for Web sites, videos, presentation software such as Power Point, and even the ever-useful transparency of olden days. Before much longer, electronic art collections will also be available via the Visual Resources Library.

The low-tech end of the spectrum is the picture collection. In January, 1998, the VRL acquired the Picture Collection from the Kalamazoo Public Library. This collection contains thousands of images from magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and original photographs. First started in the late 1940s, it now contains a half-century of popular illustrations, and, in fact, has even earlier material since the late 1940s date only notes the point that the staff began formal collection and arranging of the materials. One of the key sources are the women’s magazines dating back to pre-World War I. Another is the superb documentary photography and text of the 1940s and 1950s clipped from Life magazine. Sections of long out-of-print books were also added to the files. In short, visual American culture for eight decades of this century are represented in the Picture Collection.

Valuable sections of the collection include pictures of book illustrations, portraits of famous people, and myriad aspects of U.S. and world history. Art, literature, and education studies would be enhanced by examples of pictorial interpretations of Alexandre Dumas’ Three Musketeers. Students aspiring to be children’s book illustrators would find inspiration from Jessie Willcox Smith’s work. Portraits range from Mahatma Gandhi to Antonin Dvorak to James Fenimore Cooper to Jules Jean Lecomte-du-Nouÿ’s vision of Demosthenes.

The Picture Collection is available to students, faculty, and staff. Access is made available by a subject index to specific subjects, people, or events. A user can check out the pictures, or the Visual Resources Library staff will make slides for classroom use. Copyright can be a problem, but the staff will also assist in determining if rights to use the image on the Web or in some other form of mass distribution can be secured.

Moving into the realm of middle to high technology is the VRL’s use of the World Wide Web. As academic Web sites become more and more popular for course review and distance learning, questions about using images on the Web are common. Patrons looking for an image to illustrate a Web site need to know that publishing on the WWW is like any other kind of publishing, i.e., rights must be obtained in order for the author to use the “borrowed” image. Visual Resources Library slides cannot be used on individual Web sites, but the staff can assist in locating the source of an image for patrons. One role of the VR Library is to create, maintain, and catalog images for patron use.

Electronic images are especially key to the development of image libraries whose purpose is to bring digital images into the library as well as catalog them. The Visual Resources Library is very much a part of this trend to acquire “virtual” art collections. One of the newest products is the AMICO Library that has just been made available at WMU. AMICO stands for Art Museum Image Consortium, and is comprised of 23 well-known, North American...
Of Libraries and Books
— Diether H. Haenicke

By David Isaccson

[Diether H. Haenicke, President Emeritus of Western Michigan University, catalyzed significant and lasting changes in the University Libraries. Some four months before his retirement on July 31, 1998, he shared his observations, beliefs, and love of libraries and books that motivated his extraordinary 13 years of commitment to the Libraries at the University.]

Disappointing, very disappointing! Whenever Diether Haenicke first visits a university, he goes to see the main library. At Western Michigan University, his first impressions of the main library, Waldo, were not good ones. In fact, the library was crowded, poorly lit, and generally "unwelcoming" in every respect. The presence of an open dumpster adjacent to the back public entrance of Waldo Library seemed symbolic of an attitude, unconscious or not, of disrespect toward a place and a service that were central to the mission of every university. Indeed, he was so disappointed by his first view of the library system that, except for other, more attractive aspects of the University, he would have withdrawn his name for consideration as President. There was so much that needed to be done.

Accordingly, one of the first goals that the new president set when he began his tenure as president, in 1985, was to do something major with Waldo Library. The facility had to be prepared to accommodate the new technologies including a total electronic system (acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, resource sharing, online catalogs and indexes); little used resources had to be identified and stored elsewhere to provide space for major new collections; seating, carrels, and special areas had to be radically expanded or built; and, overall, the building had to become an attractive environment in which to study and do research. Within a few months, he saw and seized a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to obtain state funding for a major renovation of Waldo Library.

Today’s Waldo Library is completely unrecognizable from the building that Dr. Haenicke visited over 13 years ago. Symbolically attached to the University Computing Center by a bridge with a striking clock tower, Waldo Library is notable on the outside with an architectural design that has become a campus focal point. Remodeled at a cost of $19.5 million, it reopened in April of 1992. That transformation provides doubled seating capacity, thirty-eight faculty research carrels, study rooms, two state-of-the-art instructional classrooms, and a sophisticated online computer catalog, as well as dozens of computer terminals accessing the World Wide Web and a multitude of electronic data bases.

Diether Haenicke is especially pleased that the Board of Trustees has set aside a room in Waldo Library for his office. That space is located near one of his favorite places in Waldo—the beautifully appointed Meader Rare Book Room. The rare book room, on the third floor, and the adjacent Special Collections Department, constitute the "jewel in the crown" of the renovated Waldo—and Dr. Haenicke was personally involved in the design of both areas. Recently, The Western Michigan University Magazine (Spring 1998), itemized the President’s favorite things. Not surprising is his favorite building: "Waldo Library. It is what I hoped for right from the start" (p. 31).

Of course, the physical appearance of a library does not a library make. Equally, if not more important, is the substance of the collection itself—the breadth and depth of its books, periodicals, and multi-media resources. Diether Haenicke was quick to test the quality of WMU’s collection, by looking toward his own interests: German language, literature, and history. Although he found the areas adequate, he also could tell that the collections did not meet the needs of an evolving University—especially the University that he planned WMU to be—a graduate intensive, research oriented institution. As a result, he resolved early—and kept that resolution—to allocate significantly more dollars to the library acquisitions budget than had ever occurred before in the history of the school. Recently, Dean Lance Query noted that, since 1990, “priority funding has occurred every year.” Moreover, the library has received over $700,000 in one-time funds—a figure that, in March of 1998, Diether Haenicke rounded off to an even million.

The financial commitment of Dr. Haenicke to the University Libraries is unquestionable. He has attempted to support library resources for each new academic program that has been approved. Among them, of course, are some uniquely expensive undergraduate degrees such as engineering and nursing, plus a dozen and a half new doctoral programs. All are part of the ultimate objective to achieve status as a Research University II under the Carnegie Classification. State support for funding has not come easily. Presentations about the high cost and inflation of library acquisitions, especially for serials, are not something about which legislators are often interested. Although this President was successful with the legislature on several occasions, he also admits, with regret, that he hasn't done all that he wanted to do for the University library collections, or its overall staffing.

When Diether Haenicke speaks of librarians, he speaks with a special awareness. He appreciates the role of educated and dedicated library personnel who must be there to interpret collections and to teach retrieval strategies to students, faculty, and staff. Carol Haenicke, the President’s wife, whose career in
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public libraries included more than a decade in Portage as well as earlier work in Ohio has reminded Diether of how important trained staff are to the use of libraries. He believes her—as his record shows. He also is very proud of the Carol Ann Haenicke Collection of American Women’s Poetry that he established in the Special Collections Department of the University Libraries. The Haenicke Collection is, indeed, a rare collection for any campus. That collection of American women poets, covering 200 years of writing, honors his wife, one of her scholarly interests, and offers valuable research opportunities in an area in which the University now offers a doctoral degree.

When commenting on the need for more professionals for the University Libraries, Dr. Haenicke made special note of the Libraries’ programs of information literacy and increased attention to library instruction. He is hopeful that both areas will continue to grow. He remarked upon the somewhat ironic fact that despite a heavily automated library environment, ever more dominated by electronic databases that presumably make information more accessible, we need more librarians with specialized expertise to locate and interpret library resources for users.

Books and libraries have always been, needless to say, an important part of Diether Haenicke’s life. Some of his most fond memories are of his mother and father reading books aloud to the children in the evening after dinner. Even today, his leisure time is devoted to only two choices: reading and classical music. Dr. Haenicke still keeps in touch with a now quite elderly high school teacher who helped to inspire his love of literature as a young man. But, this strong advocate of books does have painful memories that center around the book burnings he was forced to watch when he was a young boy during the Third Reich. The “suspect” authors whose works were burned by the Nazis are, he reflects, among the most accomplished of authors—Jewish and non-Jewish.

Dr. Haenicke’s discussion of books and libraries concluded with a personal reminiscence on the central importance of the influence that teachers have on students. When Diether Haenicke decided to work on his doctorate in German literature, he was especially honored to be asked to work on a dissertation in history by the scholar Franz Schnabel. This scholar and teacher profoundly influenced the young Haenicke because Schnabel had not only survived the Nazis, but had become so much more prolific and dedicated after the war ended. An academic library can be gifted with a rich stock of books, but students need the inspiration of professors such as Schnabel who encourage them to study, think, and learn. Diether Haenicke says that one of the most common things he hears, from both graduating students as well as alumni, is how much of a difference particular professors have made in their lives. He adds that he then tells those graduates and alums that their thanks should be given directly to the professors—not to him alone.

And so, Diether Haenicke, we who serve the University Libraries and/or are part of the Friends of the University Libraries will take this opportunity to thank a man who made a difference in our lives and in the life of the University Libraries at Western Michigan University. You have given generous personal and intellectual as well as financial support to the Libraries. Welcome to your office on the third floor of Waldo Library.

Diether H. Haenicke’s commitment to libraries and Western Michigan University has been definitively accentuated by his establishment, on July 27, 1998, of a $1.5 million endowment to be “used at the discretion of the Dean of Libraries...to fund University library acquisitions.” The guidelines further specify that the endowment is “intended to augment, rather than replace or reduce existing general fund support...”

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art museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. These museums are providing high resolution images and descriptive information of selected works from their collections that are then delivered electronically to subscribing libraries.

Of course, seeing a virtual object d’art is not the same as viewing the real thing, but resources found in collections such as the Art Museum Image Consortium expose patrons to works of art that they might ordinarily be unable to see without visiting museum collections. Since AMICO includes museum cataloging records along with the image of the art work, those who access AMICO are able to get more information about a work of art than those who actually visit the museum and “see” the real work of art.

Western Michigan University is fortunate to have been chosen as one of the 20 AMICO Library University Testbed Sites for the 1998-1999 academic year. As a testbed library, patrons and staff have the advantage of trying out and experimenting with the imagebase, and, in turn, providing the project developers with feedback as to ease of use and accuracy of the system. This information will then be used by the project investigators to make necessary modifications, and, ultimately, to make available the best possible imagebase.

The University Libraries is also engaged in its own digital image collection. Images from the slide collection will be available to patrons using our WestCat system. Since the collection has been growing by thousands of images every few months, the ability to locate exact images through the OPAC will be of great benefit to users. A recent addition, during the winter semester, 1998, brought over 1400 slides of medieval manuscripts from the Pierpont Morgan and Bodleian libraries to the Visual Resources Library.

Remember, when needing inspiration for a paper on interior design, an image for a lecture on World War II’s Pacific Theater, a picture of mid-twentieth century cotton processing equipment, proof that paper dresses really did exist in the 60s, or just a reminder of the innocence of Charles Kingsley’s Water Babies, there is a source at Western Michigan University. See you—and the picture—at the Visual Resources Library, 2213 Sangren Hall.
The Book and Its Forms: A Lesson Learned

By Tom Amos

Librarians in the University Libraries at WMU have faculty status. One thing that faculty rank does is to certify that an individual has the right, if not the obligation, to teach formal University classes in addition to the types of instruction that occur within the library itself. All that is required is to find a department or academic unit that can use your particular expertise. In my case, the first step came when I spoke with Paul Szarmach, director of the Medieval Institute, to whom I proposed a jointly taught course on the history of the book. Since there was a Medieval Studies course, Interdisciplinary Studies in Medieval Culture, that could be devoted to any appropriate topic, the means to enroll existed.

The second phase of development came through the Lee Honors College and its Dean, Joseph Reish. Dean Reish was most agreeable to a history of the book survey as a part of the offerings of the College. The course, Honors 490/Medieval 500: The Book and Its Forms, was launched for the first time during the Fall semester, 1997. The title reflects the course objective of examining the different forms that "books" have taken—clay tablet, papyrus scroll, medieval codex manuscript, printed book, and electronic document—and the roles each form played in its respective society.

The course also offered the opportunity to "show off" the Special Collections holdings. The University Libraries collection includes many items used by the now-closed School of Library and Information Science for its history of libraries and the book classes. As a result, there is a clay tablet from Babylonia dated to 2,700 B.C.E., a fragment of Egyptian papyrus, and samples or solid holdings in just about every other component that comprised the survey course. The arrangement that brought the Institute of Cistercian Studies Library to Western Michigan University, and a commitment to acquiring rare books from selected historical periods has enhanced the collection even further. The Special Collections materials, along with many volumes on the history of the book found in the general stacks of Waldo Library, proved to be a treasure trove for student papers and projects.

First, however, Paul Szarmach and I had to organize the class. The syllabus (http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/grad/book/index/html) was based on a class taken with Professor David Kaser, Indiana University; in part, on a course offered by Professor Samuel Traister, University of Pennsylvania; and in part, from the sources uncovered when randomly browsing the World Wide Web. Readings from the textbook, Henri-Jean Martin's The History and Power of Writing (University of Chicago Press, 1994) were combined with "virtual field trips." This phrase refers to Internet Web sites that contain illustrations or exhibitions on the topics covered. There were also "real" field trips to The Scriptorium at Grand Haven and the Newberry Library in Chicago, where students could see a world renowned manuscript and rare book collection, and hear from experts in the field.

The class consisted of seven graduate students and one talented and courageous undergraduate. Fortunately, both brought different background strengths to the subject being studied so that the playing field was quite level. Professor Szarmach and I quickly saw the value of dividing the readings for each week among the students, and as a result, the course evolved into a seminar. We were also able to meet in the Edwin and Mary Meader Rare Book Room, a felicitous setting for book history, and informally gathered around a table to discuss the topics that had been studied. One week might see pieces of papyrus scattered on the table along with facsimiles of Greek and Roman books, while another week we would have the opportunity to examine the Libraries' facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible and other incunabula.

The students quickly became involved in teaching as well as learning. Each week, one or more of the class would prepare by reading a specialized article or book; he or she then shared the substance of the reading with the class. They also could either write papers or make oral reports. One student, Tracina Jackson-Adams, who has been the Cistercian Institute graduate assistant for the past two years, did a special exhibition that traced the history of modern fine printing from the Kelmscott Press to the 1990s. Student papers included the history of the book in Wales, examined the role of the book in Anglo-Saxon England, and looked at underground printing during the French Revolution.

There were benefits to students and faculty alike in the class experience. First, Paul Szarmach and I simply found it great fun to teach the survey. The Book and Its Forms. Not surprisingly, it became a learning experience for us as well as the students. Certainly, given the unique nature of the subject, plus the expanse of book history that was covered, students truly were given or found information that was not readily available in any other course on this campus. Moreover, a final conclusion emerged that is most important to include in this report. Prophecies of the "death of the book" will only come true if we do not take time to understand what the book is, what it has done, what it can do.

As the weeks passed, we rethought our approaches to the material, and modified our strategies in class so that the themes of the various topics might better relate to other courses, other research, other experiences in which the students were engaged. There is a major need for a regularly offered course that deals with the evolution of the "book" in the history of civilization—although the amount of history to be covered is almost impossible to survey within a single semester or session. Finally, The Book and Its Forms confirmed the fact that the University Libraries and the Special Collections Department have additional and important roles to play in furthering Western Michigan University's missions of teaching and research.

Book Historians: Tom Amos, Betsy Griffin, and Marisa Hart
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i.e., connections to Internet resources, is a labor-intensive process. Many records in our catalog will need to be created by original catalogers with in-depth knowledge of the Internet and resources in non-standard formats. Moreover, given the ephemeral nature of electronic location on the Internet, and the unstable manner in which its sites exist, a hotlink can send a patron to nowhere. What existed yesterday has now disappeared. As of yet, we have no final answers to the problems inherent in “pointing” versus “owning.” However, we are convinced that WestCat must make use of the “graphical interface” that has changed information management. The old catalog was a highly organized bibliographical record of the collection of a particular library. WestCat is still such a catalog. In addition, because of the nature of the Web, WestCat is now an information gateway to the Internet.

The decision is made. The new generation OPAC and library management system is a “go” and running. Patrons and staff members are able to locate resources found in the University Libraries via a Web interface. Our bibliographic records indicate what the University Libraries “holds,” and we are developing links to the vast array of external, worldwide network sites and documents. Moreover, the new Voyager software has made our catalog into one of the most sophisticated retrieval systems that exists anywhere in the world. The traditional ways to retrieve information (author, title, subject, keyword, call numbers) are augmented with several novel types of discriminating search strategies, an extensive cross reference mechanism, automatic truncation, and, quite important, relevance rankings.

Welcome to WestCat. Welcome to the 21st Century.

Freedom’s Voices

Two of the most striking recent works added to the Carol Ann Haenicke American Women’s Poetry Collection are illustrated in the photograph on the right. The top, pop-up book is Lady Freedom Among Us (Janus Press, 1994), a poem by Rita Dove in one of the unique book creations of Clair Van Vliet. While serving as Poet Laureate of the U.S., Dove wrote this poem personifying the statue of Freedom atop the Capitol dome that she could see from her LC office.

The lower book is the poem On the Pulse of Morning (Random House, 1993) that Maya Angelou read at the inauguration of President Clinton in January of that year. Random House printed a limited edition of the poem in paper wrappers, a copy of which is shown here.

Two African-American women poets, two celebrations of freedom from our nation’s capitol city and one of the many areas represented by the American Women’s Poetry Collection.

Capitol Poets

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Dwight B. Waldo Library  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-5080