Sounds of Music

By Greg Fitzgerald

"Here we will sit and let the sounds of music creep in our ears."

 Appropriately, these words from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* grace a plaque accompanying the portrait of Harper C. Maybee that hangs in his namesake library. Some fifty years have passed into history since the music collection at Western Michigan University was named for Harper C. Maybee, the first head of the music department at Western State College. For almost fifty years, students have sat in a library named for him, letting the sounds of music creep in their ears.

WMU’s oldest and only named branch library, the Harper C. Maybee Music & Dance Library, had its first home in a specially constructed and designed building, the Maybee Music Hall, on the site now occupied by the University Computing Center. Maybee Hall was one of the first buildings on the new west campus, opening in 1951, some years before the adjacent Waldo Library. A facility to house the music collection and its special formats, where students could listen to assignments between classes, lessons and rehearsals, was needed—as it is today. Music students still live where they work!

The story of the University’s music program is one of phenomenal growth, and the library grew along with the program development and enrollment. In the 1960s and 70s, music could literally be heard all over campus as new and expanding programs quickly outgrew the Music Hall, and used space wherever it could be found. The library remained in Maybee Hall, adding one room and then another, replacing seats with stacks piled ever higher with books, scores, and records. Then, just before it burst at the seams, along came the Dalton Center.

The Dalton Center is home to the School of Music and the Department of Dance. When opened in 1982, the Center was the jewel in WMU’s crown, and remains today as one of the finest arts facilities anywhere. The library, on the third floor above the fray of classrooms, practice rooms, and teaching studios, boasted all new everything, and above all, space. One very large well-lit room, it impresses even yet: a recent note in the suggestion box read simply, “Beautiful facility.” (Thanks. We intend to keep it that way.)

To music and dance faculty and students, a new library meant, for the first time in many years, ready access to all their collections. Now a book could be pulled from the shelf without moving three others to get to it! Periodicals that had overflowed to Waldo Library were returned to the music collection. Recordings were protected in closed stack areas. The dance collection was expanded, incorporating holdings from Waldo and the dance department. The name of the library was modified to include “Dance” and reflect the added coverage.

The University’s core music collection had a tradition of strength, and with the new library (and later, better budgets), it grew stronger. Although located in a what had originally been a normal school, a teachers’ college, where the music education field held sway, Western’s first music librarian, Ada Berkey, built a solid foundation of musicological and scholarly resources. The Music & Dance Library’s holdings include complete editions of composers’ works; anthologies of music; and books and journals in music history, theory, and pedagogy—all items were and are the backbone of a major collection.

The library has a Web presence on the University Libraries’ site, with pages of information about its collections and services (http://www.wmich.edu/library/depts/music-dance-library.html). Annotated
A Hobson’s Choice: Books or Web Sources?

By David Isaacson

Sometimes it is better to use a website than an old-fashioned book. Sometimes the reverse is true. At other times, it’s a toss-up. Sometimes a book is more factually reliable and even easier to use than a website. Just because something is online doesn’t mean that finding the actual answer is easy or that the results are worth the effort. Experience will help, but unfortunately, the “final answer” changes as each day the World Wide Web changes and its search engines evolve and multiply. Similarly, different print reference sources provide assorted answers although changes occur much less frequently due to the length of any print publishing process.

Recently I had a reference question that seemed to be a natural and quick answer for The World Book Encyclopedia, still one of the best of the basic multi-volume encyclopedias: “How many deaths were there in the Revolutionary War?” I chose the print version of World Book because it is easy to use—even if one doesn’t start with the index as librarians have been taught. Also, a simple statistic such as American Revolutionary War fatalities can visually be separated from other information on a page of the encyclopedia. The nature of the question also suggests a tool written in relatively simple or introductory English so that junior high students can understand the meaning of the text. For decades, World Book has been reviewed as a reliable source for general overviews of subjects that would include “ready reference” or fact-based answers. In fact, it is very carefully edited so those more difficult topics are first discussed in simpler, student-oriented terms followed by more complex words and concepts. There are graphically highlighted sections in larger articles that facilitate browsing or locating some smaller unit of information within a larger unit.

I found the article on the Revolutionary War in the “R” volume, and skimmed the pages to the end of the article where I found a section called “Results of the War.” There, it was easy to identify two paragraphs of detail including statistics, and, more specifically, the information that 7,200 people were killed in battle. In addition, if those who died in military camps from disease or weather exposure or in prison after being captured by the British were included, the total of all deaths of the early American revolutionaries was 25,700. The British deaths totaled about 10,000.

Two days later it occurred to me that perhaps I could have answered the same question more efficiently by searching the full-text online version of World Book available from the University Libraries’ alphabetical list of databases found on our website (http://www.wmich.edu/library/). Indeed, I did find the answer: “War losses. American military deaths during the war numbered about 25,000. In addition, approximately 1,400 soldiers were missing. British military deaths during the war totaled about 10,000.” Not only is the online version a condensed version of the print volume, but the information in the print version, because it is more precise, seems therefore also to be more accurate. However, and this has been shown to be true in several studies, it took me longer to find the information online rather than in print. When using the online product, it took time to figure out from the pull-down menus that I had numerous searching options, and that I probably wanted to choose the full-text mode of searching. Even then, the search did not take me to the exact part of the article I wanted; I still had to browse the article, which was harder to do since the search terms were not boldfaced as they are in some print and online databases. This consumed at least as much time as browsing the print version.

My point could be made over and over every day when a librarian must make a choice between searching either the online or the print version of the same resource. Online is often not the more efficient way of answering reference questions as opposed to the “old-fashioned” way of using printed resources. And, different types of resources in print or online actually have different search issues. For example, finding a statistical table in the World Almanac in print or online, where it is found among the FirstSearch databases, has other difficulties because of two different approaches to searching.

I can’t help but point out that finding the original question in the renowned The New Encyclopaedia Britannica in either the print or online versions is more frustrating than in either version of World Book. The index of the print version, which I knew I must use given the Micropaedia and Macropaedia divisions, did not, as far as I could tell, have a sub-entry for Revolutionary War until I found the heading “United States War of Independence.” Fortunately, there was a cross-reference from “Revolutionary War” to this somewhat arcane heading. A scanning of the article did not yield an answer.

I then decided to try the new, highly touted, free, online Encyclopaedia Britannica. The search under “deaths revolutionary war” gave me 31,496 responses, the first of which linked the words “war” and “revolutionary” in the article on the “Reign of Terror” in the French Revolution. This kind of result is frequent when searching keyword indexes. Unless the key words entered have only one interpretation, the results will cover a wide assortment of hits that merely show that the keywords are found buried in the text. Many of the commonly used search engines, including the indexes to full-text reference tools, find the indexes to full-text reference tools, find the number of times a word occurs in a “document.” Word combinations, phrases, and sequence can reduce the number of hits, but online indexes and different search engines search in different ways with a variety of search techniques that can only be learned after reading lengthy “help” screens. The original goal of a common interface between different systems is far from being achieved.

I browsed the next 30 or so entries that highlighted my search terms, but none gave me anything on the U.S. Revolutionary War. My next search using the terms casualties, revolutionary, and war also gave no obvious results in the first 10 hits. I got smarter and decided to use the same rather old-fashioned terminology online as I had in print. Apparently, EB has not edited the online version because “deaths, war of independence,” led me to the same online text as I’d found in print. Quite predictably, I had no better luck trying to ferret out the number of deaths in the online version than I had when I browsed the print edition.

My next, presumably reasonable choice, if one believes the hype on the Britannica home page, was to search “the best sites, chosen by our editors, of the Web.” I tried “deaths revolutionary war,” but my first hit was something useless from Antiques magazine, and the next ten hits were no better. I was less than impressed by the vaunted web choices made by a once reputable publisher whose name stood for quality and thoroughness in general encyclopedias.

Fortunately, these examples of successful and unsuccessful searches are not par for the course in reference work. The original question about Revolutionary War deaths came from a student who described it as “trivia.” But even trivia questions need to be handled professionally. Had the patron insisted on a more authoritative source, assuming that World Book was unacceptable, I would have searched further. Certainly there are specialized books on the Revolutionary War that might be more authoritative than the many diverse statistics found in World Book.

The real moral or point of this story is that if reference work is facilitated and advanced by the electronic revolution, then there are a lot of caveats to be

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Preservation—At Risk

By Tom Amos

In the library world, the question of preservation, if and when it occurs, becomes a discussion of whether we should preserve “format” or “content,” an insider librarian’s debate in librarian language. What that debate means in everyday terms is this: By accident or design, my library has a copy of the first edition of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer on its shelves. Over time, the copy has worn out—the cover may be battered, pages missing, the spine broken. Do I spend money to preserve or save the book in that format, a first edition, or do I buy a modern paperback edition, bind it, and put that on the shelves thus preserving the content. In the happiest of all worlds, I would hope to do both.

Different libraries, and, sometimes, different departments within the same library, will have varying answers to the question of preserving format or content. A special, non-replaceable collection within any type of library usually attempts to preserve the original condition of each record in that collection. At WMU, for example, the Archives and Regional History Collections, located in East Hall on the old campus, does use certain basic methods of preservation. Among them are acid-free folders and storage boxes, limited climate control, ultraviolet filters on lighting, encapsulation, archival sleeves for selected material, and special storage facilities for some materials.

When I came to WMU four years ago, there was no preservation program in place for our department of Special Collections although there had been some preliminary committee discussion. Some years earlier, the Institute of Cistercian Studies Library, then located in Hillside, a remodeled faculty apartment complex, had its own bindery with equipment and material for various projects. By the early 1990s, when the ICS library was merged with the University Libraries’ Special Collections, and moved to the third floor of Waldo Library, the bindery equipment had gone into storage. No in-house bindery existed, only the most basic work could be done in any department of the Libraries.

More important, the biggest problem in preservation is the lack of consistent climate and humidity control. Since the Libraries are largely composed of books printed on wood pulp paper, poor environment has sped up the chemical processes in paper or cloth bindings causing them to turn yellow and become brittle. Only one small rare book vault in the renovated Waldo Library Special Collections area provides complete protection from climate changes or exposures to sunlight or other sources of ultraviolet rays. Because of the acid instability of the books and other printed materials that are located throughout Waldo Library and its branches, there are many “problem books” in our collections. In addition, some books are located in humid locations resulting in books that contain dormant mold spores. Others have cracked joints and hinges, or even more serious damage to their bindings. Some of the older books have metal boxes and clasps, and pose a threat to their neighbors on the shelf.

For example, when the first security system was installed many years ago, the Libraries’ staff had to glue metal security plates to the back paper lining of the book cover, and then glue the last page down over them. Moisture gathered inside the closed book; the plates rusted and did serious damage to the cover and pages of the book itself. Another example of our lack of experience in preservation was the use of neat’s-foot oil and lanolin on leather bindings. Unfortunately, a number of our parchment bindings were also oiled. Parchment does not absorb the mixture, and the books were left with a sticky, dust-collecting residue on the bindings.

Given these problems, the logical first step to a preservation program was to determine what needed to be done, that is, a conservation survey of the items found in Special Collections. This also provided an opportunity for the student assistants to learn how to evaluate books: they had to take each book from the shelf and write up a description of its condition, with special attention to any problem that might require treatment. We began this survey in January 1997 and have surveyed over 5,000 books to date—but this is only a quarter of Special Collections and there are hundreds of thousands of books and other deteriorating resources in the rest of the Libraries.

Very quickly, the first rule of preservation became our guide: Do Nothing That You Cannot Immediately Reverse. Because we had much to learn and do, we chose to make book boxes our first “treatment”; these are protective enclosures made from acid-free board stock. Students were taught to take size measurements from the books, and then to cut and fold the board stock. But, the limited Special Collections Reading Room area didn’t lend itself to this kind of activity. We needed somewhere to store the large sheets of acid-free board and other materials—and to do the work. Space was found in a microfilm reader area on the second floor, and Michael McDonnell, Head, Government Documents, agreed to give up the space to create Room 2045, the Preservation Office.

The new room was “furnished” with the old Cistercian Studies board shear, a huge cast-iron paper and board cutter weighing over 500 pounds; three large cast-iron book presses; and some smaller finishing presses. An assortment of tables to hold the equipment and a large-scale mat cutter were located and moved to the room. The tables provided space to work as well. There is a large cabinet for supplies, and boxes of acid-free board and document boxes are stacked along one open wall space.

Once we had an area in which to work, we could initiate other treatments. We have rehoused the Mowen Collection of German Newspapers in tray boxes made from corrugated acid-free board, and have organized seven different collections

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Preservationists Samantha Cairo and Tom Amos.
of papers with document boxes and acid-free folders thus preserving over 400 shelf feet of modern manuscripts. We do hinge and spine repairs with acid-free paper and PVA adhesive. Mold spores in books are killed with a 100% alcohol solution because we would need a fume hood and vent to use thymol crystals dissolved in alcohol. Since the goal is to preserve books in their original condition, Special Collections is one department in the library that retains dust jackets on books. We began to use sheet Mylar to cut dust jacket protectors since commercially available protectors are not chemically neutral. At a professional library meeting, I saw a machine demonstrated that would place Mylar pockets around books. This item was purchased and the machine allows us to cover 45 books an hour rather than hand making 10 or so in the same amount of time. Every treatment is labor intensive even when we are able to add special equipment.

An operational problem emerged as the program grew. I could not supervise work in two different locations located on two separate floors of Waldo Library, and it was obvious that the duties needed personal direction as they grew more complex. To solve this problem, the position of Special Collections Coordinator was created in the fall of 1999. The current incumbent is Ms. Samantha Cairo, a graduate of WMU’s Medieval Studies M.A. program, and a “graduate” of the Rare Book Room’s “school of preservation” where she spent almost three years as a student worker. Recently, Ms. Cairo completed courses in book and paper repair at the Newberry Library in Chicago, and will use her new skills and techniques to improve our repertory of treatments.

The Preservation Office is an important part of the University Libraries’ efforts to maintain our collections. Along with the funding and administrative support has come excellent assistance in the graduate assistants supplied by the Institute of Cistercian Studies. Tracina Jackson-Adams and Dorothy Porter have been invaluable to our program, and have trained a corps of student workers to the tasks. The Preservation Office staff has been helping other departments of the Libraries with repairs, materials, and advice on how to do their own work. Our hope is that the program initiated by Special Collections will ensure that a century from now a reader can find and read any book that we currently have—and in the same condition that we acquired it. Such a goal requires endless attention to details long unattended, but the staff of Special Collections is dedicated to the preservation of our University Libraries.

The University Libraries—A Brief History

By Sharon Carlson

The history of the academic library at Western Michigan University begins with the origins of the institution itself. In 1903, after a battle in the State Legislature about the location, Western State Normal School was officially established in Kalamazoo. The first classes were offered in local school and governmental buildings in 1904 and attracted 117 students. By 1905, the original part of East Hall had been built. It included a series of rooms for the library that were located on the second floor. About 500 books had been acquired, and a librarian, Esther Braley, was hired to oversee and develop the collection.

Miss Braley was appointed as the first library director at the salary of $800 a year—a fairly good salary for the time. She was a graduate of the University of Michigan, and had earned her library degree from the University of Illinois State Library School. Few individuals had such a library degree. In fact, the University of Illinois training school was the only degree awarding school in the Midwest, so that the new librarian in Kalamazoo came unusually well credentialed. In addition, Esther Braley had been employed at the University of Michigan Library. During her tenure at the State Normal School, Braley oversaw phenomenal growth in the collections. The fledgling collection of 500 volumes grew to 1,300 volumes in the first year alone.

The growth of the library was not surprising given the forward direction of Western State Normal School even during the first years of its existence. Agitation to build a library building came within the first decade as the scope of the School expanded its enrollment and programs. By 1913, a new science building had been constructed, and the number of volumes in the library approached 20,000. A few years later, in 1919, Western began granting four-year bachelor degrees. The State Legislature funded a library building program to provide the much-needed facility, but the outbreak of World War I, and rising costs during the war years put the program on hold until the 1920s.

World War I also contributed to the resignation of Western’s first library director, Esther Braley. One of Braley’s closest friends, Mary Master Needham, served as a nurse in World War I and was widowed as a result of the war when her husband was killed in a plane accident in France. She questioned the necessity of war and wrote about it several years later in a personal narrative, Tomorrow to Fresh Fields (Horizon House, 1936).

In 1918, Needham returned to the United States to talk about the destruction and devastation in France. She scheduled a presentation at Western and sought others to work with her toward the reconstruction effort known as the “American Committee for Devastated France.” She convinced her friend, librarian Esther Braley, to return to France with her. Braley took a leave of absence and wrote periodically to the Western Normal Herald of her work with the children in France. By 1920 she returned to the United States, but did not return to Kalamazoo.

In the meantime, Braley’s absence required somebody to lead the library. Anna French was the natural choice because of her education and experience. French had earned degrees from Michigan State Normal College and Drexel Institute School of Library Science; the latter school was the third library training school founded in the U.S. She had taught school in Kalamazoo for one year before beginning at Western as a Library Assistant in 1907.

Anna French’s two major contributions to Western State’s library history would be her direction of the construction of the first building dedicated as a library and substantial growth of the collections. French would also view firsthand the growth of Western, as it became Western State Teachers College in 1927, and 14 years later, in 1941, Western Michigan College of Education. Enrollment by the mid-1940s would top 4,000 students and, by the end of French’s career, Western would be attracting international students, and, in conjunction with the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, could offer its first
The University Libraries

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graduate degrees to students.

Ground was broken for the original library building in May of 1923, which was constructed at the cost of $480,000. After the building was completed little more than a year later, 1924, five librarians and 24,000 volumes were moved into the imposing edifice that would serve as Western’s major library for the next 33 years. At the time of French’s retirement in 1946, the library would have about 63,000 volumes.

The new library building was symbolic of Western’s growth as an institution and the College’s place within the community. Neo-classical in design, the building completed, on the north side, the quad design of the East Campus hill. The interior featured marble stairs and a reading room spanning two floors. A large stone fireplace highlighted the north wall, and the spacious walls provided exhibition space for the Todd art collection. Exhibit cases in the reading room and foyer featured special collections. It was a closed stack system, with most of the growing collection kept in the stack tower.

During the last years of French’s appointment as director of the library, Western College formed a library science program with Miss Alice Louise LeFevre at the head of the Department of Librarianship, and a Kellogg Foundation grant as a key incentive to the Western Michigan College of Education. Though not administratively related, the instructional program always had ties to the library since it was physically located in the two library buildings (North Hall and Waldo), regularly used the library faculty to teach classes, and provided internship and employment opportunities for the undergraduate and graduate students. The original curriculum focused on training school and public librarians and was under the School of Education. By the early 1960s, the Department would offer library science degrees at the graduate level, and, by the close of the 1960s, had gained official American Library Association accreditation for its primary master’s program that prepared academic, public, school, and special librarians. Miss LeFevre served as head of this program until her retirement in 1963 when Dr. Jean E. Lowrie took over.

Lowrie directed the program and provided the leadership for major program development and expansion in the 1970s and 1980s that included, in the School of Librarianship’s curricula, an undergraduate minor, two master’s degrees, several M.S.L. specializations, and three specialist (two-year) degrees beyond the master’s level. For many years, the School had the third largest graduate enrollment in the University; students were recruited from State, national, and international settings. Due to an assortment of reasons, the School of Library and Information Science closed its doors in 1985. However, about 2000 graduates are still working in local, state, national, and international libraries. A number of the University Libraries’ faculty and staff members are graduates of the program.

Anna French lived on through the residence hall, located on the West Campus, named for her, and the library lore connected to her name. Prior to the last major remodeling, her picture was prominently displayed in a staff lounge on the second floor of Waldo Library that was also named for her. She was known for box-opening parties when new shipments of books arrived. She taught a required Library Methods course in the library science department, and was recognized by almost all of the students on the campus in the 1920s through 1940s. French was also known for her love of cats. It is even rumored that she kept a cat in the library—ostensibly for rodent control, but also because she loved felines. At the dedication of French Hall in 1960, a former faculty colleague noted Anna French’s gift of gracious living which included “a fire well-laid, flowers carefully arranged, a contented cat in the center of the room, a cup of hot tea, and a friendly visit.” She had an active retirement from 1946 until her death in 1958 and took a major role in the University’s 50th anniversary celebration in 1953.

French was followed as director of the library by another interesting personality, Dr. Lawrence Sidney Thompson. Thompson was the first director to hold the Ph.D., which he had earned from the University of Chicago. His library science degree was from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Thompson was most likely the library’s first staff member who held membership in Phi Beta Kappa, and had published several scholarly articles prior to coming to WMU. During World War II, he served as a special agent for the FBI, and had also been employed as a bibliographer at the U.S. Department of Agriculture library before assuming his appointment at Western Michigan College in 1946.

During Thompson’s two years at Western, he wrote a guide to the library and, within his short period as director, the collection grew in size over 10% to 70,000 volumes. He left in 1948 to become a Professor of Classics and the library director at a major research university, the University of Kentucky, Lexington, a position he remained in until his retirement in the 1980s. Dr. Thompson was a prolific writer for the rest of his career at Kentucky and into his retirement. WMU’s catalog lists 20 books, and World Cat has references to 305 publications with which he was associated. He was particularly interested in bibliography, and the Kentucky Novel (University of Kentucky Press, 1953), jointly authored with Algeron D. Thompson, is still the preeminent work about authors and novels of that state. He wrote about rare books and special formats. His publication Legends of Human Skin (University of Kentucky Press, 1948), appears to be one of the few works dealing with the use of human skin as a binding material!

Although not quite half-a-century, the first 43 years of the library history at Western Michigan University saw the foundations laid for today’s research library and cutting edge electronic resource center. The three directors, Braley, French, and Thompson were each significant to their period with Braley and French as key to the solid collection development, cooperative community relationships, and strong service orientation that mark and highlight the University Libraries. Watch for the second installment on WMU’s library history that will be found in the next issue of Gatherings.
A Hobson's Choice
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recognized. Human factors are just as sig­
nificant as the inadequacies of computer­
ized indexing and other technological
issues. At first glance, electronic sources
do seem to perform magical tricks for our
users. However, humans have designed
all of the software, including the indexing
methods. Those searching tools still suffer
from “numerical” approaches rather than
interpretation or mediation that is based
on human knowledge of an information
source. Other human beings have to
search them and words become the key to
all of the responses—accurate or inaccu­
rinate. Whether a keyword or subject index
retrieves data that in and of itself is accu­
rate is another key issue. Even the most
official organization or individual is
potentially fallible. Finally, there is the
question of the actual patron need.
Reference librarians have to relate to and
understand people as much as they must
have skills in searching print and/or
electronic resources. The question that
motivated this essay seemed to be
straightforward—a statistic about deaths
during a particular war. It is easier to find
a number than to find an analysis of how
and why the War of Independence
happened. It is easier to find a discrete
piece of information than to find the right
and/or complete explanation of a concept
or complex event. Reference librarians
must do both and more in their daily ref­
ence interactions. At this date in the his­
tory of libraries or information centers or
sites on the information highway, the
entire interpretive process has been com­
plicated by a choice between the old-fash­
toned print sources and the opportunity
to search online sources—and the search
catalogs or indexes to each. But, that
choice is possibly the least of the issues
facing the now and future librarian. This
commentary is all by way of reminding
you that a reference librarian’s work
involves significantly more than the
overly simple distinction between an elec­
tronic or printed source of information.
Would that it were only a Hobson’s
choice!

[Hobson’s choice. ...the choice of taking
either that which is offered or nothing; the
absence of a real choice. After Thomas Hobson
(1544-1631) of Cambridge, England, who
rented horses and gave his customer only one
choice, that of the horse nearest the stable
door. Random House Dictionary of the
English Language]

Sounds of Music
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guides describe library and Internet
resources in music and dance, and pro­
vide links to hundreds of Web sites. The
Web seems a logical extension of the
Music & Dance Library’s role as a
resource both on and beyond the campus
for performers, private teachers, societies
and organizations, festivals and schools,
and their patrons. Whether identifying a
song hummed over the phone, or doing a
national search for an obscure chamber
work, we have always been committed to
serving the large and active arts commu­
nity of which we are a part.

Half a century after Harper Maybee’s
dearth, students and others using his
library still “sit and let the sounds of
music creep into their ears.” But they do
much more, within and outside the
library, that the library makes possible—
watching, searching, “surfing,” and inter­
acting with the whole world of music and
dance activity and scholarship. And while
Harper C. Maybee probably would not
recognize the University, the department,
or the music collection these days, we
know he would still be proud to have his
name on the Music & Dance Library.