Building Collections: An Interactive Task

Effective collection building in an academic setting begins and ends by anticipating and responding to the information needs of our users. In order to be responsive to the world of users, the Libraries has established several “communication channels” and processes. Three internal channels are key.

First, each academic department at the University is assigned a library liaison (http://www.lib.msu.edu/library/liaison/) to facilitate effective two-way communication. These librarians work directly with a departmental faculty “partner” to build collections that support the department’s academic programs. In addition, the faculty librarian promotes new resources useful to the department; advocates and provides instruction about accessing the Libraries’ catalogs and databases, both print and online; and involves the academic unit in decisions about new or reallocated resources.

A second source of recommendations is built on the interactions with students and faculty at the public service and reference desks and in our instructional classes and workshops. These communications identify topics being researched at WMU and how well or poorly these are served by our existing collections. And, planned and impromptu conversations, e-mails, and phone requests are supplemented with patrons’ online suggestions via our Web site where anyone may request new books and other resources.

Finally, we have, for many years, participated in a major plan, the Blackwell Collection Manager that is built on the interactions with students and faculty at WMU and how well or poorly these are served by our existing collections. And, planned and impromptu conversations, e-mails, and phone requests are supplemented with patrons’ online suggestions via our Web site where anyone may request new books and other resources.

The Rise of Online Access

Computerized catalogs and indexes to the literature, initially on CD-ROMs and then on the Web, provide, without question, easier as well to History, Comparative Religion, Management, Social Work, Physics, Psychology, etc. reviews dozens of related titles each week that can be added to the automatic profile shipments.

Beyond the liaisons’ interactions with departmental faculty, other users, and the collection profiles, additional ongoing acquisition procedures exist. Among them is a major responsibility of the liaison librarians to examine the product reviews, accreditation requirements and recommendations, journal citation rankings, and selected title listings of their respective disciplines. This means that the Libraries’ faculty and staff are constantly evaluating and investigating new products that come to market. As part of this process, we set up trials and solicit feedback about online resources before committing to a purchase.

Still another measure of what needs to be accessed and/or acquired comes through our Resource Sharing office. Items that have been requested by faculty and students through interlibrary loan, because they are not available in print or other media in our Libraries or online from the Web site, serve as indicators of deficiencies in our existing collections that need to be addressed. We also track the circulation statistics of our print resources and analyze usage statistics of online items to inform future decisions. We are increasingly able to compare WMU’s collections against those of peer or aspirational institutions, to identify subject strengths and gaps, as well as unique or rare items that we might wish to highlight or make more readily available.

The First Law of Libraries: Collecting Resources

By Barbara J. Cockrell, Associate Dean, Resources & Technical Services

The University Libraries’ collections comprise more than 4.5 million individual physical items including books, periodicals, images, music, video, manuscripts, statistical data, maps, government documents, institutional records, archival materials, indexes, databases, and more. There is a vast array of content presented in an ever-expanding mix of formats that includes physical and virtual materials, literature and data, ancient documents and new research, items of unique local interest, and those with global perspective. However, despite the differences between these individual items, they have something in common. They have been selected to support the teaching and research mission of Western Michigan University. The University Libraries, through its faculty and staff, strives to provide quality resources that fill the University’s informational needs.

Continued on page 2
First Law of Libraries...
Continued from page 1
as faster and more comprehensive searching. Some of these indexes have articles and other content embedded within them while others simply provided citations to the primary literature. Scholarly e-serials began to appear in the early 1990s and by 1994 there were more than 75 peer-reviewed electronic journals. Early adopters were the sciences (notably physics and computer science), engineering, and business, although even in 1997 some of the largest publishers in these fields had no journals online. The trend, however, was inescapable. By 2002, 75% of the journals listed in the Science Citation Index, 63% of those in Social Sciences Citation Index, and 34% of the titles in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index had the content of the articles available online (Library Journal, April 15, 2002, p. 52).

The significant and rapid change in the availability of online scholarly information can be seen in the University Libraries. Only a decade ago, in 1997, the WMU Libraries reported 56 online databases/indexes and only 33 online serials. Ten years later, in 2007, the University Libraries had 445 searchable indexes to information, and subscriptions to approximately 9,000 electronic serials, a truly exponential increase in full text availability. Currently, we subscribe to almost twice as many serials in online format as we do in print, a ratio that is likely to rise as our clientele expresses a strong preference for online availability, AND as publishers provide safeguards for permanent archiving and increasingly move to online only publishing of serials.

Besides its omnipresence, online access provides a welcome alternative to microfilm or fiche, which, for most of the 20th century, were the traditional formats used to preserve items like newspapers or annual reports that are transient in nature and often published on poor quality paper. Academic libraries have deliberately moved to electronic format for these types of materials as they become available. We are now beginning to see increased utilization of the online potential of such products as it becomes possible to manipulate and transform the information that is presented. Thus resource like DemographicsNow allows users to compare variables geographically and investigate trends over time while SciFinder Scholar allows users to visualize molecular structures and simulate reactions.

Of course, not all library resources lend themselves well to the electronic format. The physical attributes (such as bindings, paper, and annotations) of our rare books can hold considerably more value to a scholar than the text they contain. Even today with computers everywhere, few people express the wish to read novels and non-fiction online. Students in the University Libraries almost always want an "old-fashioned" book to check out, not an electronic resource even with Amazon and Kindle readily available. Perhaps when online or stand alone readers more closely approximate books, this will change, but it's not here and now. The University Libraries has approximately two million print monographs and these will not be disappearing any time soon. However, with the demise of print, electronic books have become the most rapidly growing segment of the information market and they represent a significant part of University Libraries' monograph collections.

An online format is increasingly the preferred standard for works such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, and computer manuals that are scanned for terms and referenced rather than read cover to cover. Texts that can be easily divided into short passages or sections also lend themselves well to the online environment. Business, engineering, computing, science, and, surprisingly, poetry have all proved highly successful in electronic format. Western Michigan University's Libraries has purchased "persistent," i.e., non-expiring, access to 25,750 electronic books and leaves access to almost 50,000 more. These range from a collection of early English books that date back to the 1400s to books on every conceivable subject, e.g., nursing, international affairs, accounting, biography of North Africa, statistics, race and racism, etc.

Extending Library Collections
Despite all of our best efforts as described in the paragraphs above, it is unrealistic to expect that the collections of the University Libraries will meet every user's needs. There are no limits to the topics being researched at varying levels of sophistication within a university. On any day, at any hour, someone will access our main page at www.wmich.edu/library/ and search one of our hundreds of databases or our catalogs and find reference to an article or a monograph that we do not have online or in print. Since the doors first opened, the University Libraries has expanded our collections through borrowing and lending agreements with other libraries across the world. This service, interlibrary loan, locates what we do not have, in another location, requests the item, and the article or book is sent to us either electronically or by document delivery. Our students and faculty receive what is needed through their computer or find it in their mailbox.

Still another access point to information not directly owned or leased is a state network. In the last year, Michigan has implemented MelCat, a statewide catalog service and the University Libraries is a member. MelCat is a shared catalog of information resources owned by public and academic libraries throughout Michigan. Patrons who do not find a title in their Libraries can search, locate, and request items from the collections of fellow members and pick up the item a few days later at Waldo Library. We are also members of the Center for Research Libraries, a consortium of North American universities, colleges, and independent research libraries that acquires and preserves a range of scholarly materials that would be outside the scope and/or price range of these libraries individually. Items from the CRL collection (including special interest foreign language resources) are made available to member institutions electronically and through interlibrary loan.

Because of these efforts ... we have strong collections that reflect our institution's past and continuing commitment to teaching and research. We have strong collections that reflect our community's history and growth on which the future is built. We have strong collections that set us apart from other Michigan institutions and make us a special place in which to study and research the past and the present, and ultimately, shape the years to come.

Typo: "Electroic" should be "Electronic"

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The Upjohn Company Archives at WMU: A ★★★★★ Collection

By Sharon Carlson, Director, Archives and Regional History

Nineteenth century medicinal products were generally ineffective, particularly compounds made into tablets. Early tablets usually passed through the body, undigested, without achieving any desired health benefits. The solution for creating digestible medicines would radically change the pharmaceutical industry. In a patent application filed October 14, 1884, Dr. William Upjohn of Hastings described the process in one page and included a sketch of the device used to create “frangible” pills. The patent was granted February 10, 1885, and the image of Dr. Upjohn’s thumb easily crushing a pill would be associated with the Upjohn Pill and Granule Company for decades.

Upjohn and his brother Henry continued to make advances and the business grew, becoming The Upjohn Company (the capital “T” was mandatory) in 1903. The Company’s influence in the pharmaceutical industry was enormous during the twentieth century. Phenolox wafers, the first candy laxative, became an early best seller. Products developed during the 1940s included some of the earliest antibiotics and Gelfoam, a sponge-like material used during surgery and to treat hemorrhaging. In the 1950s, The Upjohn Company introduced Orinase, the first oral diabetes drug. Landmark pharmaceuticals in the second half of the twentieth century included Depo-Provera, Motrin, Xanax, and Rogaine.

While the company had offices and employees around the world, Upjohn’s influence in Southwestern Michigan was especially significant. In so many ways, “The Company” was the heart of the Kalamazoo community. For most, the ties to Upjohn came through employment or the many philanthropic activities of the corporation or members of the Upjohn family. At the time of The Upjohn Company’s Centennial in 1986, nearly 8000 people in the Kalamazoo area were employed by Upjohn. While that number had declined to about 6,300 employees at the time Pfizer acquired Upjohn, the influence was and remains profound. The philanthropic influence continues to this day. In Waldo Library alone, the Meader Business grew, becoming The Upjohn Company for decades.

University Archives and Regional History Collections acquired the records of The Upjohn Company as a donation from Pfizer. The acquisition itself is an interesting story and emblematic of the excellent inter-institutional relationships of the various historical agencies in the community. Pfizer initially contacted the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and gave staff the opportunity to identify three-dimensional items of interest. After selecting sample bottles, dispensers, and other artifacts, the Museum declined the remaining manuscript materials and suggested that the Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections would be a more appropriate repository and better for researcher access. Curator John Winchell and student intern Andrew Young coordinated the move of about 180 boxes and numerous ledgers from a storage facility.

The collection came with challenges and opportunities. The papers form a large and complex collection including correspondence files, ledgers, photos, blueprints, and audiovisual materials. The collection also includes sample cartons and labels, company publications (Overflow, Upjohn News, Scope), and the centennial research, including interviews. While some of the company publications exist in other libraries, the majority of the materials are unique records and photographs, the original copies that do not exist in any other collection. These manuscripts date back to the earliest days of the company and even include some materials predating the company, for example, there are papers of Dr. Uriah Upjohn, father of Dr. William E. Upjohn.

Most boxes were simply labeled with the generic identifier “historic records,” but there was no inventory identifying the contents of the boxes. The long-term viability of the collection was also compromised. While materials had been neatly packed, the records were in acidic cartons and folders and valuable photographic materials were stored in oversized acidic envelopes. Blue prints were rolled and rusting paperclips held some materials together. What needed to be done, i.e., a complete inventory, reorganization, and preservation program, was clearly beyond the scope of what a single staff intern could accomplish in a semester. When this problem was presented in a grant request to the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, the Foundation stepped in and partially funded a position. As a result, Andrew Young was employed as a processing archivist in February, 2008.

Andrew has begun the exciting and sometimes daunting task of processing the records using standard archival practices. Processing involves evaluating the records for historical value and physically organizing them into series to facilitate researcher access. Young will complete an archival finding aid, which will provide background information about the collection and an inventory listing the ledgers, folders, and materials in the collection. During the processing phase, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the long-term viability of The Upjohn Company records by transferring materials to archival boxes, folders, and sleeves. Acid free boxes and folders will protect the paper-based records and reduce deterioration. Protective sleeves for the photographs will reduce damage from handling. The long-term outcome will be the preservation of irreplaceable historical records.

In addition to the archival finding aid, the collection will be promoted in other ways. A catalog record will be created and entered into WorldCat, the Online Union Catalog (http://www.worldcat.org/) that may be accessed by anybody with a computer. The final portion of the project involves creating an online exhibit of about 25 items. This will provide additional information to potential researchers.

The study of pharmaceutical history is a growing field of interest to many researchers. There are at least two scholarly journals associated with the subject and the staff of the WMU Archives and Regional History Collections has assisted a number of researchers interested in The Upjohn Company. Two years before acquiring this outstanding collection, at least two out of state researchers traveled to Western Michigan University to use the then limited holdings, namely incomplete runs of the Company’s publications. Needless to say, once this five-star archival collection of The Upjohn Company is processed and promoted, the Regional History Collections at WMU will become a gathering place for numerous researchers.
The Obrecht Collection: Origins and Cataloguing

By Susan Steuer, Head, Special Collections

The Dom Edmund Obrecht Collection, located in the University Libraries’ Special Collections, is the finest and most comprehensive collection on the Cistercian-tradition in the United States. The Collection came to WMU in 1973 on permanent loan from Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Kentucky. Over one hundred manuscripts and thousands of books were collected by Dom Edmund Obrecht (1852-1935), an Alsatian Trappist-Cistercian monk who served as abbot of Gethsemani Abbey for 37 years. The manuscripts are of particular importance because each is a unique handwritten document and may include information that is not in other manuscripts of the same text or the same type of text.

Gethsemani Abbey is part of a worldwide network of Trappist-Cistercians abbeys that trace their origins to the final years of the 11th century. A contemplative monastic order, the Cistercians were founded in Burgundy (now in France) by reformist Benedictines. The Trappist-Cistercian order developed in the 17th century as a re-reform under the leadership of the abbot of La Trappe, also in France. The title “Dom,” from the Latin Dominus, “My lord,” reflects medieval social customs and is used by Cistercians as a courtesy title for abbots, the elected superiors of monastic communities.

Sent from La Trappe to the U.S. in 1892, Dom Obrecht soon became the fourth abbot of Gethsemani, the earliest Trappist foundation in the United States. During his tenure as abbot, he traveled to Europe for meetings of the triennial Cistercian Chapter General of abbots and also corresponded with Cistercian abbots in Europe, as well as in other parts of the world. During and after the World War I, these monasteries were suffering great hardship and were in desperate need of assistance. Either by purchase or as gifts of thanks for financial assistance, manuscripts and rare printed editions of Cistercian materials found their way to Gethsemani from these brother institutions. In his collecting, Obrecht tried to recreate a typical medieval Cistercian library to illustrate the heritage of the Cistercian order to his New World monks.

The deposit of the Obrecht Collection to the University in 1973 came through the efforts of the then Director of the Medieval Institute, John R. Sommerfeldt and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Cornelius Loew. The deposit of manuscripts and books coincided with the opening of the Institute of Cistercian Studies at the University. Over the past 35 years, the ICS has become a center for scholarship on the Cistercian tradition and, the wide-ranging impact the Order has had on theology, art, politics, economics, and culture since its foundation in 1098.

Building a “Catalogue”

Ever since the Obrecht Collection came to Western Michigan University from the Abbey of Gethsemani, a printed catalogue of the manuscripts in the collection has been planned to make the materials easier for researchers to locate and study. Preliminary catalogues of the manuscripts and incunabula (books printed prior to 1501) were prepared, prior to their transfer to WMU, by Chrysogonus Waddell. Waddell, a monk at Gethsemani and a well-known scholar of Cistercian liturgy and theology, originally developed an annotated inventory, rather than a full scholarly descriptive catalogue. Manuscript catalogues are especially complex to prepare because there is no universal standard to regulate them or the information they include. In the case of the Obrecht Collection, the manuscripts date from before 1174 to the 1960s; this means that they include materials from the time before printing became widespread (roughly 1501) and the period afterwards.

In general, manuscript books produced after 1501 receive a far less detailed description than those written earlier. The advent of printing standardized the production of basic texts and vastly increased the number of books available. Many texts do not appear in manuscript form as often after this era, and manuscripts were no longer the only resources for understanding the history and literature of that time. In addition, numerous manuscripts after this point incorporate standard elements derived from printing, and, as a result, the manuscripts themselves have less variety that requires detailed descriptions.

During the 1980s, Dr Anna Kirkwood served as an interim librarian in Special Collections. She was a specialist in manuscript studies, and used her time to develop full bibliographic descriptions of the manuscripts that were written before 1500. Dr. Kirkwood’s detailed descriptions include a full analysis of the structure of the books, the means of construction and decoration, and their contents. She also produced an extensive bibliography that still serves as a starting point for researchers using the collection.

Dr. Thomas Amos, Special Collections librarian from 1995 to 2005, oversaw efforts to develop descriptions for the manuscripts written after 1500 so that the final catalogue will reflect the full extent of the collection.

These earlier efforts have been revived over the last several months. Dr. Elizabeth Teviotdale (Medieval Institute), Susan Steuer (Special Collections) and Rozanne Elder (ICS) have advised a group of talented graduate students from the Medieval Institute on modernizing and standardizing the descriptions and in preparing the catalogue for publication both in book form and online. Arthur Russell, the 2007-2008 Institute of Cistercian Studies Graduate Assistant, has been organizing this effort with the assistance of Micah Erwin, Katie Brambrink, and Peter Sewell. Two of these students plan to attend graduate library and information science programs in the future and all of them believe that this has been an exceptional opportunity to learn about manuscript studies and bibliographic description. Over spring break, a team of ten from ICS and the Libraries, including Dean Joe Reish, traveled to Gethsemani Abbey to discuss the

Arthur Russell and Micah Erwin: Manuscript Organizers

Continued on page 6
The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (CEAS), located at WMU’s Parkview Campus, currently has 89 faculty and serves nearly 2400 students, with 300 at the master’s level and 55 at the doctoral level. The College offers programs in computer science, computer engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering, engineering management, industrial/manufacturing engineering, mechanical/aeronautical engineering and paper/imaging engineering. As can be seen from these several qualifying adjectives, the discipline of engineering cannot be easily generalized. There are a number of distinct subdisciplines, each with its own key research focus and sources.

Engineers use a broad range of resources, perhaps broader than any other scientific discipline. In addition to scholarly journals, monographs, and conference papers, engineers routinely use patents, government documents, grant-funded technical reports, industry standards, and “grey literature” documents such as white papers and article preprints. This dazzling array of information sources, more accessible than ever before due to the presence of the Internet, makes it difficult for engineers to engage in “one stop shopping” for information. Unlike chemists, who can rely almost completely on SciFinder Scholar, or biologists, who can use Biosis Previews or the Zoological Record, engineers cannot search just one main source for information. Materials engineers may need to depend heavily upon the physics journal literature. Paper and imaging engineers may use literature in optics, chemistry, and forestry. Civil and construction engineers often rely on government documents such as reports by the National Geological Survey and the U.S. Department of Transportation. It is imperative, therefore, that engineering scholars and students know a couple of key principles:

1. Each researcher, both student and teacher, must be aware that many special sources exist and know how to find them on the University Libraries’ Web site, AND

2. Each researcher, both student and teacher, must be able to find and retrieve citations and the full text effectively.

To make the situation even more complicated, the College of Engineering does not have its own separate library collection of books, journals, and other resources, both print and online. All print engineering resources are kept in the Main Campus Library, four miles away from the Parkview Campus, hence the continuing push by the University Libraries to supply more and more essential engineering information sources in online formats. The point of this short article is to highlight the changing landscape of engineering information and how the University Libraries is adapting to this changing landscape.

First, for many years, U.S. Government technical documents and geological survey reports have been available in the Government Documents Collection on the second floor of Waldo Library. The University Libraries is a federal depository library and receives about 75% of all documents published by the Government Printing Office. These books and reports contain a vast amount of technical information that is relevant to the engineering disciplines. When you do an engineering-related search in our WestCat online catalog, you will frequently get references to these government documents, particularly in the areas of aeronautics/astronautics, geology, and transportation. What you may not know is that, while many of these documents are available as print or microfiche copies in Waldo Library, many are now also available online directly via WestCat. In these cases, when you view the record of the item, you will see a weblink to the item. This weblink is a PURL (Permanent Uniform Resource Locator), basically a stable or persistent link to the item provided by the Government Printing Office. The following is an example of a PURL: http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS84968. All online government documents are freely available to the general public, with no need to login. Although the depository material crosses all disciplines, the government is a significant publisher of information relative to all areas of engineering. Go ahead and try a search in WestCat. You’ll be pleasantly surprised at what is available to you.

In addition to government documents, the University Libraries subscribes to several thousand online engineering books (or e-Books), also available directly through WestCat. Unlike the online government documents, these e-Books are only available from off-campus to the University community. Those within the University community can access these materials at any time by using their BroncoNet IDs and passwords.

Finally, while the average cost of engineering journal subscriptions—$2071 per title per year according to the 2007 “Periodicals Price Survey,” Library Journal—is not the highest among the sciences (chemistry and physics are higher), the total annual cost for these subscriptions still requires a shocking portion of any library’s yearly acquisitions budget (See the Cornell Engineering Library exhibit at http://assets.library.cornell.edu/ast engr/about/Subscriber.html for some details). However, the University Libraries is committed to providing access to the journals that our faculty and students need for learning, teaching, and scholarship. Some examples of online journal collections that provide great value for our engineers include: ACM Digital Library (Association for Computing Machinery), ACS Web Editions (American Chemical Society), AIAA Research Library (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics), ASCE Research Library (American Society of Civil Engineers), Emerald Journals (organizational management and leadership), GeoScienceWorld, IEEE Xplore (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers), Institute of Physics Journals, Sage Materials Science Journals, Elsevier ScienceDirect, SIAM-Journals Online (Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics), SpringerLink, and Wiley-Interscience. To browse the full list of our online journals by title, by subject, or by publisher/society, please go to: http://www.wmich.edu/library/journals/.

The bottom line of this short review is that more resources of value to engineers at all levels are available @your library. The future is, indeed, unlimited as more and more resources become available online. Already, there is more to be examined and searched than any one of you is aware. Please take the time to browse and use the magnificent online engineering resources that the University Libraries makes available for you. Please also access my World of Engineering blog at http://parkview.wordpress.com/. 

[Edward J. Eckel began his faculty career at the University Libraries in June, 2006. He brought "10 years of experience in academic libraries... experience in the use of innovative instructional technologies... and a commitment to library service... and the promotion of information literacy" to his Engineering/Science Librarian role in the Science Reference unit located in Waldo Library. Prior to his arrival, he had earned a B.S. at Cornell University and a M.S. from Drexel University as well as serving libraries at Cornell, Drexel, the Delaware County Community College, and Aquinas College.]
The Obrecht Collection...
Continued from page 4

descriptions in progress with Father Chrysogonus. During a two-day work­shop, we were all able to learn a great deal about the types of manuscripts in the Collection. We also discovered the ways in which our particular manuscripts fit into the rich heritage of the Cistercian Order and the light they shed on events within the Catholic Church and medieval Europe.

Manuscript Cataloging Examples

The oldest manuscript in the collection is a pre-1174 codex that was copied in the Abbey of Morimondo in Italy by Bertramnus de Rioldis. Simply identified as Manuscript r, the work provides several interesting examples of how liturgical specialists, such as Father Chrysogonus, study and apply manuscript evidence to their area of specialization. The first Cistercians were trying to reform monastic practice by returning to the model of the ancient church and the earliest Benedictines, the earliest recorded practices followed by the founders of the Christian Church and of western monasticism. This codex is an example of these early Cistercian efforts and the efforts the monks made so that these authentic texts also worked in their day-to-day worship. It is an antiphonary, a musical book that is used in the round of eight daily services which frame the Cistercian day.

An antiphonary provides both words and music for a short verse, usually scriptural, which precedes the psalms that make up the services. The style of musical notation in Manuscript r was rather old-fashioned even at the time it was written, and has only one line around which notes rise and fall. It largely indicates the rhythm and direction of the melody, but not specific notes, making the notation difficult for modern musicians to interpret. Because the early Cistercian monks did most of their research in developing the Cistercian service books in the libraries of Metz, which they considered the repository of the most authentic liturgical tradition, this manuscript reflects the Teutonic musical tradition, rather than that of France where the earliest abbeys were located. The manuscript contains the antiphons for the sanctoral cycle (the celebration of saint’s days), roughly one-quarter of the antiphons necessary for a full annual cycle of services. Manuscript 1 also includes a rare tonary that explains the notation and how the material should be sung. We also know from this manuscript there occurred, in 1475, at Morimondo Abbey a great storm of such strength that a monk-scribe decided to note the fact in the margins of the manuscript.

Other manuscripts in the Collection await scholars to explore them. Manuscript 23, written by a Flemish nun in the sixteenth century, reflects the mystical spirituality of that period and is written in a form of prose-poetry. Manuscript 28, the Deeds of the Abbey of Saint Susanna de Urbe, a community of nuns in Rome, includes information on a wide variety of practices that are not well documented in other sources, such as the blessing of garments and the names of women who entered the monastery.

Two days of intensive study with Father Chrysogonus at the Gethsemani Abbey helped all of us develop a stronger appreciation of the history of these manuscripts and of their potential utility to scholars. The project has been a good example of how our collections in the Libraries can contribute to the education of both the next generation of scholars at WMU and the international scholarly community. Each of the students and staff members who has worked on this project has come away with a richer understanding of how landmark works shed light on specific historical questions and will contribute to making the catalogue a true reflection of the breadth and depth of the collection.

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