Gifting Books and Places

By Susan Steuer, Head, Special Collections

The University Libraries has benefited from many generous gifts from its supporters. In addition to gifts of books from their own collections and gifts of time, friends of the University Libraries have established several significant monetary endowments. Each donor is able to designate how his or her gift to the Libraries will be used and the managers of the collections carefully follow the fund guidelines in using the funds to give our library resources greater breadth and depth than we could otherwise afford.

Special Collections from Special Donors

Few users who visit Waldo Library are aware of the many collections that currently exist because special, external funding has supported the acquisition of valuable books and non-print media. The following listing, arranged alphabetically by the name of the fund, identifies some valuable areas of collection development.

The Beta Phi Mu, Kappa Chapter Special Collections Fund, Beta Phi Mu, a national graduate honors society, was founded in 1948 "to recognize and encourage scholastic achievement among library and information studies students." Kappa Chapter was composed of selected individuals who obtained a Master of Science in Librarianship from the School of Library and Information Science that existed at WMU from 1946 through 1985. When the School closed, the local members of the BFM Chapter continued to function for many years, but, in the late 1990s, the Chapter no longer was viable. At that time, the members voted to donate its treasury to the University Libraries for use in purchasing materials in the history of the book and printing.

The Carol Ann Haenicke American Women's Poetry Collection Endowment began with the acquisition of an existing collection of poetry from Harrison Hayford, a professor at Northwestern University and an avid book collector. The collection and endowment were named after Carol Ann Haenicke, first lady of WMU at that time, who was a devoted reader of poetry and a patron of the arts. Since the original purchase in 1993, the collection has continued to grow and is used in instruction in English, history, and art. This fall, the collection will also be used for instruction in our paper engineering program to illustrate the development of bindings and book construction. The overall direction of the endowment funds is determined by a board of advisors made up of teaching faculty and librarians.

The Charles R. Starring Endowment was established in 1974 for the purposes of developing the holdings of the Western Michigan University Regional History Collections. Starring taught and published in the area of Michigan history at Western Michigan University between 1928 and 1969. In keeping with his professional interests, the funds, first made available in 1989, have helped purchase monographs, census collections, and manuscripts. These collections are actively used in WMU classes, as well as by individuals and groups such as the genealogical society.

The Diether H. Haenicke Endowment Fund supports acquisitions in German literature and for unique additions to the Rare Book Room. An incunable, or early printed work, which complements the Institute of Cistercian Studies Collection of Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Kentucky, was the most recent acquisition.

The Special Collections Endowment was established in 2001 to purchase a wide range of materials that supplement our existing strengths in the areas of medieval and religious studies, photography, book history and typography, miniature books, and historical children's literature. In addition, the fund is used to purchase materials for the collection that have been requested for research and instruction by our teaching faculty. These items enhance the opportunities for scholarship at Western Michigan University at all levels.

Circulating Collections

The Library Endowment Fund is a broadly based, umbrella fund developed from a variety of bequests and gifts. As a result, it includes a number of directed endowments for particular types of books and research materials. Among them are the Leslie Wood Funds for Geography and Geology, the Ann Kercher Memorial Fund for International and Area Studies (particularly sub-Saharan Africa), and the Herbert J. and Anne M. Vogt Fund for circulating and serial collections.

Special Gifts

The Alice Louise LeFevre Endowment was established in honor of Alice L. LeFevre who was the first director of the School of Librarianship at WMU. The endowment was originally intended to provide scholarships for graduate students studying library and information science at WMU. After the graduate library program was discontinued in the 1980s, the fund was redefined to support library-related scholarships and financial grants including stipends for WMU graduate students working under faculty supervision, on special projects in the University Libraries. This program offers students real life work experience and research opportunities that assist them in finding employment. In addition, the Libraries obtain vital services and studies that improve overall performance and effectiveness.

The University Libraries has also been a benefactor of gifts that have enhanced the physical environment. On selected rooms throughout Waldo, nameplates recognize major donors, e.g., William Johnston and Ronda Stryker on Conference Room 3001, who have "gifted" that room. One of the most unusual architectural features in Waldo Library is its striking, three-story atrium with a circular dome window. This impressive rotunda is the first thing noticed as visitors come through the doors. Dedicated to Dr. W.H. Upjohn, the rotunda was a gift of Mary Meader to her father, an early executive of The Upjohn Company. The Libraries are additionally indebted to Edwin and Mary Meader for other gifts. Among them is a beautiful area, a rare book room, on the third floor of Waldo Library adjacent to the main office of Special Collections.

The Edwin and Mary Meader Rare Book Room is a richly finished and furnished room designed for academic gatherings, readings, and presentations. The Meaders, who are highlighted in another article in this issue of Gatherings, funded and helped design the room when Waldo Library was remodeled in the

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early 1990s. Formally opened and dedicated in 1995, the Meader Room has been used regularly for many different kinds of meetings, including the presentation of scholarly papers, panel discussions, and, in particular, as a home for classes that build on materials found in Special Collections. This area provides a comfortable, traditional space (there are no computers) and a unique ambience for students, faculty, and invited guests who, during events and classes, are introduced to the diverse resources housed in Special Collections.

Our donors have made a wonderful difference in the institution called the University Libraries. Their contributions offer our students, faculty, and visiting scholars greater opportunities to realize their research goals and contribute to the scholarly community at and beyond WMU, both now and in the future. All of us in the Libraries hope that our “once and future” supporters will continue to understand the enduring value of a gift to the WMU Libraries. These gifts enhance the services of the Libraries and provide expanded educational opportunities for our students as well as the greater world of learning.