

## The System ...

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(Netscape and Internet Explorer) for accessing information over the Internet. When installing a replacement computer, the employee's work files must be saved, so that they can be reinstalled on the new computer that has already been set up with the basic image and programs. This also includes installing the printer drivers (software that lets the computer communicate with a printer) for the printers that each employee uses. As an important subsystem to this individualized employee and patron service, it should be noted that Ed also services the Libraries' public access CD-ROM databases, e.g., African American Artists On Disc, Census of Population and Housing, CETADOC Library of Christian Latin Texts, etc. As updates are received, Ed must install the new disks in the machines, and test to see if they are working correctly.

Assuring that the dozens of public computers found in the Libraries "work" for users is another large undertaking of the technicians. This involves several sets of images, because there are several models of computers. These computers have security software to prevent patrons from changing the original configuration that was installed, and software that will return the computer to its original image when the computer is turned off and back on. Among the 170 computers in daily use are some of the oldest in the Libraries. Although there is a plan to replace the computers within the next couple of years, Ed Holloway and Tim DeBoer deal daily with failing and, in some instances, failed computers.

Tim DeBoer, the latest addition to the staff in the Systems Office, came to work at the Libraries as a contract employee from an outside employment agency. His position is essential to continue the level of services that Systems has provided for the Libraries' other employees and its users—all of whom must use computers to do their work. In addition to his one-on-one-work installing employee computers and his maintenance of public terminals, this technician does much of the data input for the inventory system. His growing background in trained computer maintenance is, as with the other members of Systems, a crucial element in the overall functioning of the office.

### "Organized to Accomplish"

One final task of the Systems Office needs to be noted since, without it, the University Libraries would not communicate electronically—either internally or externally. The key word for this achievement is "connectivity." All of the

Libraries' computers and network printers have Ethernet connections. Ethernet refers to the "wiring" that ties together each computer to the server housing WestCat, all other electronic resources, network printers, AND the rest of the world. In 2001, the Systems Office radically improved connectivity by installing new wiring for the entire staff and in 2002, the same faster connectivity was made available for the online public access catalog, the OPAC terminals. Also in 2002, Waldo Library became one of the first buildings on campus to have wireless connectivity and today all of the University Libraries' main and branch locations are wireless. The bottom line is that a wireless or wired environment—seen or unseen—must be sustained by a Systems Office that maintains, behind the scenes, all of the electronic components that comprise the University Libraries' system.

The Systems Office of the University Libraries is, according to definition, a "collection of personnel, equipment, and methods." This "collection of personnel" enjoys the ever-changing challenges of the information age and strives to make everyone's mountainous computer problems into level playing fields—not just small molehills waiting to erupt. Electronic change is recognized as constant, necessary, and inevitable. The goal of the staff of the Systems Office is to facilitate the work and respond to the needs of all who work in and use the University Libraries: faculty, staff, students, and community users alike.



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## History in the Present—II

By Maria Perez-Stablé

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[In the Fall 2002 issue of *Gatherings*, Perez-Stablé described four outstanding primary source collections of U.S. history available to the students, staff, and faculty at WMU. She also noted one superb full-text resource available to anyone who can access the Internet: the Making of America. Her odyssey through digitized history continues with more amazing sources found on the Web.]

American Memory Historical Collections (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>) are a superb place to continue our journey through historical cyberspace. *American Memory* is a major component of the Library of Congress' National Digital Library Program. The "historical collections" are multimedia libraries of digitized documents, photographs, pamphlets, sound recordings, maps, moving pictures, and written text from the Library's Americana collections. There are currently over 70 collections in the *American Memory* Historical Collections, including "The Emergence of Advertising in America: 1850-1920"; "Civil War Maps"; "From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1824-1909"; "Voices from the Dust Bowl"; "American Indians of the Pacific Northwest"; "Mapping the National Parks"; "The Church in the Southern Black Community, 1780-1925"; "Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, 1848-1921"; and "Baseball Cards, 1887-1914"—just to name a few!

*American Memory* includes a wide variety of social history collections. One of my favorites is "An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490-1920," presenting a collection of over 200 social dance manuals owned by the Library of Congress. The list begins with a rare 15th century French work on dance and ends with the 1929 publication by Ella Gardner titled *Public Dance Halls, Their Regulation and Place in the Recreation of Adolescent* (U.S. Childrens Bureau). Along with the actual dance manuals (including theatrical dance), there are treatises on dance etiquette, dance histories, and anti-dance discourses. Another interesting collection, this one in film, is the "Fifty Years of Coca-Cola Television Advertisements: Highlights from the Motion Picture Archives at the Library of Congress." It presents an assortment of television commercials, never-broadcast outtakes, and experimental footage recounting the historical development of television advertising for this well-known beverage.

Closer to home, *American Memory* has a

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## History ...

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collection titled "Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, ca. 1820-1910." The collection describes the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin from the 17th to the early 20th centuries through first-person accounts, promotional literature, ethnographic texts, biographies, colonial archival papers, and other works from the Library of Congress' collections. The Library has digitized 138 volumes portraying the land and its resources; conflicts between Native Americans and the European settlers; accounts of pioneers, missionaries, reformers, immigrants, and soldiers; the development of local communities and cultural traditions; and the growth of regional and national leadership in business, medicine, politics, journalism, law, agriculture, the role of women, and education. For students and others interested in Michigan history, this is a resource not to be missed!

One of the best things about the Internet is the plethora of quality Web sites sponsored by the federal government. Of special interest to historians is the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Web site at <http://www.archives.gov>. We all know that the National Archives houses the great documents of our country, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, but NARA is so much more. The Archives helps to preserve our nation's history by supervising the management of all federal records and documents. And when one thinks of the amount of paper generated each year by the federal government, this is a gargantuan task!

The National Archives allows citizens and researchers alike to examine for themselves the record of what the government and its federal officials have done. It truly is a national democratic resource and for those of us who cannot visit it in person, NARA has digitized a phenomenal amount of information easily accessible on the [archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) Web site. You can

begin your adventure by taking a virtual tour of the National Archives. You will learn that in its 33 facilities across the nation, NARA contains approximately 21.5 cubic feet of original text materials—this is more than 4 billion pieces of paper from the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. The Archives' multimedia collection also includes motion pictures, maps, architectural drawings, charts, sound and video recordings, aerial photographs, still pictures and photographs, and computer data sets. The amount of information is mind-boggling even to the most steadfast librarian, archivist, or historian!

One of the most interesting parts of NARA's Web site is the Exhibit Hall section ([http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/index.html)) that currently contains digitized images from 32 online exhibits featuring the many documents and visual materials held at the Archives. There is something to interest everyone on this site, from presidential diary entries to the treasures of Congress to the legends of Christmas to the day when Nixon met Elvis in 1970. One of the exhibits I found especially interesting is "Picturing the Century" which includes photographs from life in 20th century America. One can click on the photographs to enlarge them, and then visit Fifth Avenue in turn-of-the-19th-century New York City on Easter Sunday, observe children picking sugar beets in the fields of Nebraska during the Depression, and see the determination on the face of a young civil rights demonstrator in Washington, DC, in 1963.

In another intriguing glimpse of reality, "Powers of Persuasion: Posters from World War II" displays compelling wartime images that helped unify and mobilize our country during that challenging conflict. Besides the famous poster of Rosie the Riveter proclaiming "We Can Do It!," one can study posters that urged conservation of resources such as gasoline and rubber, Norman Rockwell's posters on the "four freedoms," images showing the deadly repercussions of gossip and loose talk, and a series of posters that played on Americans' emotions and their real fear of the enemy.

If one has an involvement in education, the Digital Classroom portion of the site ([http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/index.html)) offers a bonanza of marvelous teaching materials. NARA has partnered with ABC-CLIO to produce "Teaching with Doc-

uments," a 13-unit curriculum series using primary documents from the Archives' collections. Although designed primarily for students in grades 7 to 12, the activities and documents can certainly be adapted for use with elementary and college students. This site contains reproducible copies of primary documents from the holdings of NARA, and teaching activities that correspond to the National History Standards and National Standards for Civics and Government. There are tips on how to conduct research using primary documents and how to cite them, ways to celebrate National History Day, and how to build a school archives. The site also contains document analysis worksheets, developed by the education staff at NARA, to help students and researchers analyze written documents, maps, artifacts, cartoons, posters, photographs, motion pictures and sound recordings.

Just two sites, but these two incorporate an immense number of unique historical collections that eliminate barriers of time, space, and location for the beginning or sophisticated historian-or curious explorer of the past in the present. Let me also remind you of the University Libraries' **History Web Resources** page (<http://www.wmich.edu/library/sr/history-web-resources.html>), and **Primary Sources on the Web** page (<http://www.wmich.edu/library/handouts/primary-sources.html>); both are found on the University Libraries' site.

These two guides provide dozens of other links to sites that offer primary research data. And, finally, remember that a computer terminal and Internet access now provide an almost infinite assortment of full-text primary source materials. Happy researching *redux*!

## First Forbidden Book

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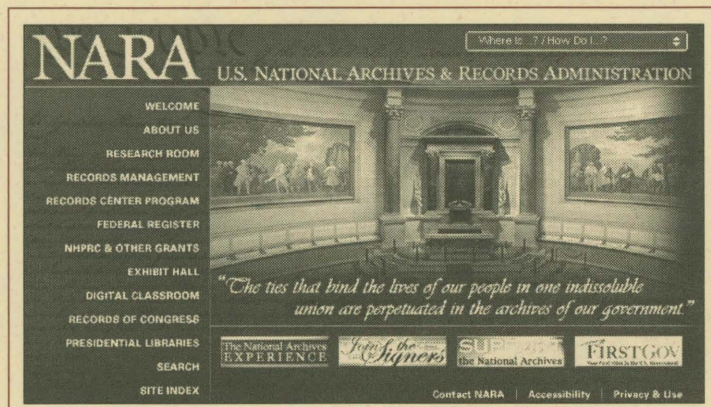
Wadey, executive director of the Guild Complex, who in 7th grade leafed through Shakespeare's plays looking for the bawdy, violent parts.

"I realized there were things I could find out in books," she says, "that my parents weren't going to tell me."

It remains a good reason for reading books other people don't want you to read: to find out things they don't want you to know.

*What was your first forbidden book? Send the title, reason, and result of opening the pages of a banned or challenged book to the editor of Gatherings. Future issues may contain your contribution to the right to read.*

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National Archives home site