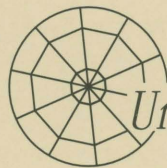


Gatherings

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University Libraries

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"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale ..."

By David Isaacson

[The name, Driscoll, Dr. Jacqueline J., is found under the FACULTY EMERITI/RETIRES/ SPOUSES listing of the WMU Directory 2000-01. More important, perhaps, Jackie can also be found under LIBRARY, WALDO (Main) with a listing as Weekend Librarian. She retired in 1991, but returned to a special part-time position on the professional staff of the University Libraries. Such a life choice is not unusual for Dr. Driscoll as the following profile illustrates. Or as Shakespeare continues, ... "her infinite variety."]

Ask any child what s/he wants to be when s/he grows up and only a few, if any, would answer: librarian. We librarians are usually made rather than born. Such is the case with Jacqueline Driscoll, who prefers to answer to Jackie. In 1967, Jackie earned her bachelor's degree in English from Douglass College, the women's college in New Brunswick, that is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She was also inducted into Phi Beta Kappa at Douglass. (By the way, WMU Libraries currently can boast that six librarians, one staff member, and one Interim Dean are PBK members—more than matching any other academic department on campus!)

Jackie got a taste of what it might be like to be a reference librarian when she worked as an Undergraduate Student Assistant in the Reference Department at Rutgers. Her boss there resembled, she said to this interviewer, the late Leo Natanson, who was Head of

Reference when Jackie was hired as the Social Sciences Librarian at Waldo Library in 1980. Both men were eccentric, kind, and indefatigable fact and idea sleuths—characteristics also attributable to Jackie. Since jobs for an English major were not easy to find, and reference work had proven to be fun, Jackie decided to enroll in the School of Library Science at Rutgers University. She received her Master of Library Science degree in 1968.

One of Jackie's most memorable library school projects involved the famous Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a part of the New York Public Library. Named after its founder and first curator, Alturo Alfonso Schomburg, the Center has the finest national collection of documents on people of African descent anywhere in the world. At a time when racial tensions in New York City were especially strained, Jackie made several day trips to the Harlem-located library. She wondered and still wonders why peo-

ple of good will and intelligence, but different skin colors, were afraid of one another no matter what the setting. Jackie brings to the mind of this reporter another intrepid social activist, feminist, and famed short-story writer from the Bronx and Greenwich Village: the "tough and fanciful" Grace Paley. Jackie and Grace are mothers, feminists, and survivors who care about individual people—men as well as women. Paley recently noted, "Whatever your calling is, whether it's as a plumber or an artist, you have to make sure there's a little more justice in the world when you leave it than when you found it." ("Writing With Both Ears," <http://www.salon.com/11departments/litchat1.html>) Jackie would heartily concur.

After obtaining her library degree, and possibly motivated by the Schomburg experience, Jackie turned down what might have been a prestigious job in the library at Yale University for a distinctly nonprestigious job working in some of the branches of the New York City Public Libraries that have been labeled as "disadvantaged" communities. Jackie served the often underserved poor in libraries in Harlem, the Lower East Side, and at Tompkins Square Park.

While working and living in the "big apple," Jackie came to know a number of other famous people over the years. In New York City she lived in a loft with the now famous painter Joan Snyder. While there she was also a friend with the artist Keith Sonnier and his artist wife Jackie Winsor. She lived near and borrowed some of the humor of the rock group, The Fugs. Her plumber was none other than Philip Glass, more famous now as a world-class



Jackie Driscoll: Librarian

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composer of somewhat avant-garde music. This interviewer has been unable to persuade Jackie that her unique take on Glass the plumber and Glass the composer cries out for a scholarly article entitled: "Through a Glass Darkly: Music to Plumb the Depths of Your Soul." Once again, Jackie's considered decision would save him from being assassinated for the crime of bad puns.

If one theme dominates Jackie's personal life, as well as her career, it is the special way she combines a tough mind and a warm heart. She's had plenty of opportunities to exercise both. Wanting to stretch her mind and explore a scholarly career along with library work, Jackie enrolled as a graduate student in anthropology in 1972 at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. After her coursework was completed, she planned to do field work for her dissertation in a copper mine in tropical Africa. That didn't work out, and ever resilient to change, Jackie ended up in what might have seemed a quite opposite, subarctic setting. The resulting dissertation was based on observations of an isolated mining community in Labrador, Newfoundland. The doctoral candidate was challenged to analyze the "strains and tensions in the workplace and the town," and uncovered "a deteriorating reality, which gave rise to expressions of social discontent and an escalation of labor unrest" (DAI, 46, #03A, (1984): 0738.) Dr. Driscoll completed her Ph.D. in 1984. Keep in mind this extraordinary experience as you read further.

When Jackie came to work in Waldo Library in 1980, she gave us a number of things not available among the other staff members: scholarly expertise in anthropology, personal as well as intellectual commitment to women's studies, and a talent for compromise she may not have known she had. Two simultaneous challenges emerged in the late 80s that caused tremendous professional and personal stress among all of the Libraries' staff. First, we were converting from the traditional "dictionary" card catalog that allowed searching of the Libraries' collections by reading through drawers of 3 x 5 cards arranged by author, title or subject. These entries had to be transferred into an OPAC—an online public access catalog that integrated the search for cataloged resources into a single search line. Second, a \$19 million total physical renovation of Waldo Library was undertaken—a renovation that eventually involved the full evacuation of the books and staff from the building.

Jackie's finest hour, perhaps, as a librarian was when she kept the beleaguered Reference Department's collective heads

above water during a multiple month period in Waldo's history when the reference books and current periodicals were housed, precariously, in the bowling alley in the Bernhard Center. The circulating books and bound periodicals were also moved a few miles away and warehoused in a building that was shared with the U.S. Army. Waldo Library had the distinct honor of being featured at the end of one of Paul Harvey's radio spots, on which he said, "Waldo Library is the only library in the world housed in a former bowling alley. It is so quiet in that library that you can literally hear a pin drop."

Jackie, at that time, was serving as the head of reference services and had to orchestrate the adequate provision of services while also dealing with a staff that was working under traumatic conditions of all kinds. Jackie managed to keep everyone "functioning" when almost nothing individually was "right." She had to be empathetic beyond human expectation, and shepherd the several misplaced, crowded, work-stressed, and frustrated librarians through their exodus from the old Waldo through the Bernhard winter and back to the "new" Waldo. One can't help but think of her Labrador experience with its deteriorating reality.

Shortly after she retired in 1991, Jackie was approached and asked if she would provide reference services for students of the weekend programs at WMU. She can be found on Friday afternoons and on Saturdays at the reference desk in Waldo Library where, once again, her breadth of experience, her ongoing desire to know and assist, and her sense of humanity relate well to both the traditional and non-

traditional students who frequent libraries on the weekends. Not incidentally, this has included keeping up, when past three score and ten, with a rapidly changing library technology that has turned the majority of access points to information into a computer interaction. Jackie copes! Would that we all could learn as much.

Jackie has three daughters who have also given her a youthful attitude toward life. There is Kate, who lives in Ottawa with her husband and two daughters; Martha, who lives in Boston; and Betsy, who lives in Atlanta. Betsy has survived three bouts with breast cancer, and continues to help her mother practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty.

Look for Jackie Driscoll at Central Reference, Waldo Library, on Fridays and Saturdays. She is one of the friendliest and wisest librarians you'll meet in the University Libraries.

The University Libraries: 2001

The Dwight B. Waldo Library (Main), built in 1958, expanded in 1967, and renovated and expanded in 1991, is named after the University's first president. Waldo houses general and scientific reference materials, maps and atlases, special collections, and U.S. and Michigan government documents along with all of the books and non-print resources found in the General Stacks. Four branch libraries contain (1) music and dance books, musical scores, and periodicals; (2) education documents and periodicals; (3) a visual resource collection of slides and other visual materials; and (4) the university archives and regional history collections.

The following statistics give a snapshot of the number of different resources and services found in the University Libraries.

The Collections

Total volumes,	
print and non-print.....	3,920,534
Total titles, print and non-print...	1,778,594
Print and electronic subscriptions	
including all periodicals	6,973
Records/tapes/CDs	22,453
Machine-readable CD-ROMS	3,484
Maps	200,548
Slides.....	101,851

Library Use

Number of items loaned	
to other libraries	17,167
Number of items borrowed	
from other libraries	14,232
Items provided to Continuing	
Education faculty and students	3, 108
Circulation for 1998-99	266,095
Instructional sessions	562
Employees	
Full time employees	
excluding students	90.8
Full time employees	
including students	144.74



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