

## A Great Library ...

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mandate or at least encourage cooperation among institutions. Universities like Western Michigan University are at another disadvantage inasmuch as the larger institutions with larger library budgets have historically had little reason to enter cooperative purchasing agreements with their smaller counterparts. However, important changes have taken place during the past years including the AccessMichigan project, and formation of the Michigan Academic Library Council, which have made consortial purchasing a reality. The WMU Libraries, I am proud to say, has been at the forefront in these statewide efforts. Consortial purchasing, combined with computer technology, has enabled us to make important progress in our goal of enabling our students and faculty to obtain the information they need when and where they need it.

Services to users have always distinguished the truly strong libraries from the rest. At WMU, the library staff takes special pride in providing excellent services. These include, among many:

- acquisitions and processing of materials, which can be effectively retrieved through use of our Web-based, cutting-edge online catalog and WWW site;
- expanded library hours with professional staffing as well as number of hours open to users;
- specialized services for our off-campus students that are on a par with services provided to on-campus students;
- constantly evolving and improved WWW access with a state-of-the-art home site (<http://www.wmich.edu/library/>);
- multiple creative uses of the latest technology to facilitate information literacy projects, location of resources, searching internal and external databases, online subject guides to discipline-oriented data, interlibrary lending; and reference services of all kinds including online reference;
- a preservation program for special collections and the Libraries that involves the conditions in which books are housed and repairs to books themselves; and
- a Visual Resources Library that is fast becoming known and respected nationally for its access to local and international graphical/pictorial data.

Given such a list of developing services, one comment must be added. I am

concerned that our relative low level of staffing (WMU ranks among the two or three worst of the fifteen Michigan universities in ratio of librarians and library staff to students) will limit our ability to continue to provide the level of services our users have come to expect and will need in the future. The academic research library is a labor-intensive enterprise where, like the rest of our society, technology has not reduced our need for skilled staff. Rather, technology has enabled the University Libraries to offer better collections, expanded access to information, and more responsive services to our users.

In the age of the Internet, we are drowning in information, but we are starving for knowledge. One especially significant focus of the University Libraries is an information literacy initiative that is designed to enable our students to become independent information seekers. The program is designed to enable our students to decide between what information is most appropriate to their needs—and not simply the information most readily available. This requires the cooperation of our instructional faculty in the design of the courses and assignments. While we have achieved promising results in a number of selected courses, the University and the Libraries still have a long way to go toward educating students to become information literate. This essential goal inevitably requires an institutional commitment toward a measurable outcome rather than the course by course approach. While I am proud that more students receive bibliographic instruction in more classes than at any other public university in Michigan other than University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, I am disappointed that WMU has not pioneered in making information literacy a requirement for its graduates as it did with computer literacy in the 1980s.

As I look back over the past seven years. I believe we in the University Libraries have achieved much. I believe we have been successful because we have concentrated on the fundamentals of excellence in collections, access, services, and instructions. We have remained focused on the needs of our users, the students, faculty, and staff. Supported magnificently by a central administration and faculty that recognizes and values strong libraries, a talented library faculty and staff have achieved as much as can reasonably be asked of them. We have built a solid foundation toward achieving one of the unchanging realities of higher education: there has never been a great university without a great library.

## Friends' Annual Meeting

By Laurel Grotzinger

April 12, 2000 marked the calendar for the annual spring meeting of the Friends of the University Libraries. Some 30 members and guests gathered in the Meader Rare Book Room to hold the annual business meeting and election. President Betina Meyer chaired the meeting that included two special presentations with certificates: the first went to Laurel Grotzinger for her service as Editor of *Gatherings*, and the second was given to William Combs, who was honored for his many contributions as a member of the Board.

The annual elections for the officers and Board of Directors were also held with the following slate unanimously approved:

President:	Dr. Richard Brewer
Vice-President:	Dr. Robert Hahn
Secretary:	Mrs. Marilyn Gosling
Treasurer:	Mr. David McKee

Board of Directors:

Dr. Mary Ann Bowman	2000-2001
Dr. Nicholas Hammer	2000-2003
Mrs. Phyllis Buskirk	2000-2004

Following the business meeting, Dean Lance Query spoke on his tenure as Dean of the University Libraries at WMU: "Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We Are Going." Dean Query, who arrived at WMU in the fall of 1993, will be leaving the University to accept the library deanship at Tulane University in New Orleans on July 1st of this year. Dean Query reminisced about "doing the right thing," and that the staff here has been able to "keep their eyes on the prize." He reiterated the theme that great libraries and great universities go together, and outlined growth and advances in the Libraries' collections and services. He noted that the Libraries has a very different look and feel as technology plays an increasingly prominent role. Query gave special recognition to the role of the "well-seasoned staff"; they have responded effectively to students who, increasingly, bring a customer-based attitude to their study and research. Finally, he noted a number of initiatives that are "online" for the next few years.

The meeting concluded with a reception for all, and a general small-group discussion of Friends' hopes for the future.