History in the Present—I

By Maria Perez-Stable
Professor and Head, Central Reference

Until the world of cyberspace arrived, intrepid researchers of past events had to traipse to far-off libraries and archives to do original research in the field of history. In the 21st century, thanks to the marvels of digitization, the Internet, and the World Wide Web, researchers can often conduct a considerable amount of primary research without ever leaving their offices, homes, or local libraries. During the last half-decade, WMU’s University Libraries has been extensively “growing” its collection of online indexes and full-text historical resources. We now offer our patrons a wealth of original documents on the Web, and multiple indexes to other materials that can be borrowed through our Resource Sharing service. Among some of the best sources of the actual texts are the following extraordinary examples of “history in the present.”

• North American Women’s Letters and Diaries (Alexander Street Press), when completed, will be the largest collection of women’s diaries and correspondence ever assembled. There are approximately 150,000 pages of published letters and diaries from individuals writing from colonial times to 1950, plus 4,000 pages of previously unpublished materials. Spanning more than 300 years, this comprehensive collection will bring the personal experiences of 1,500 women to researchers, students, and interested persons. Readers will learn what women wore, what kind of work they did, how often they attended church, what they ate, what they read, their relationships with family, friends and lovers, and how they spent their leisure time.

• Similarly, the American Civil War: Letters and Diaries, also from Alexander Street Press, consists of more than 400 sources of diaries, letters, and memoirs that provide easy access to thousands of views on almost every aspect of the conflict, including what was taking place on the home front. The writers are from all regions of the country and include politicians, landowners, wives, slaves, soldiers, slaves, seamen, and even spies. The database includes writings by both famous and unknown people, and offers perspectives from the North and South, as well as from foreign spectators. Using a specially constructed thesaurus of Civil War terms, researchers can quickly find references to battles, individuals, and events throughout the course of the war. With approximately 100,000 pages of published memoirs, letters and diaries from individuals, plus 4,000 pages of previously unpublished materials, this database is a treasure trove of information for people interested in the American Civil War.

• Another fascinating historical research tool is Harper’s Weekly, which began publishing its original print version on January 3, 1857, and whose full-text online version called HarpWeek runs through 1912. This invaluable journal is truly the only consistent, comprehensive, week-to-week chronological record of what happened around the world in the second half of the nineteenth century. Harper’s Weekly was a leading shaper of public opinion in the United States for over half a century. The illustrated contents played a key role in giving up-to-date reporting of the Civil War, the re-election of Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant’s two presidential victories, the defeat of Boss Tweed and the Tammany Hall political machine, and the first election of Grover Cleveland. At its height, the magazine’s circulation was more than 100,000, and its readership probably exceeded half a million persons.

The pages of Harper’s Weekly have been scanned in their entirety, so researchers will see and read Harper’s in the same four-column format and small font as it originally appeared. Luckily, the font size can be increased for ease of reading. In addition to the news stories, Harper’s is significant and unique for all of the illustrations, literature, editorials, cartoons and advertisements it contains. Readers of the online version, as well as the print copy, can see illustrations of the battles of the Civil War, and cartoons by such artists as Winslow Homer and Thomas Nast. Social historians and casual browsers alike will be fascinated by the wealth of advertise-
President Dwight B. Waldo Speaks His Mind

By David Isaacson
Professor and Humanities Librarian

The letter reproduced on p. 5 of this issue is imagined to be authored by Dwight Bryant Waldo who was the Principal and first President of Western State Normal School, which evolved through four name changes until it became Western Michigan University in 1957. David Isaacson, a reference librarian in Waldo Library, has been conversing—and corresponding—with Waldo for a number of years. Actually, Isaacson has listened to Waldo far more than he has spoken to him. Waldo in person is much like the rather austere man who examines each visitor to the library named after him from his portrait on the wall on the first floor, near the entrance to Waldo Library. Up until now, no one else has paid much attention to Waldo’s quiet, but absolutely assured voice. In honor of the centennial of what began as Western State Normal School, Isaacson offers these edited remarks, presented in letter format, from the educational titan who presided over this school from its founding in 1903 until his retirement in 1936. He died, in 1939 at the age of 77, but his spirit still permeates the campus environment—as shown in these remarks.

Dwight B. Waldo, First President, WMU
Searchpath to Information Literacy

By Elaine Anderson Jayne
Instructional Services Librarian

Today's electronic information environment is more complex than ever, and we all seem to suffer from information overload. Information literacy skills help us find and filter the information we need. In an academic environment, critical thinking skills help students to learn and conduct better research, but, outside of the University, such skills are equally useful and essential to all of us, whether voting, choosing a doctor, or buying a car. As a result, the need for information literacy has become a high priority not only in the library/information environment, but also throughout every phase of our daily life.

Few who use the phrase, information literacy, have a clear idea of what it means. One good way to understand this "portmanteau term" is to define it as comprising a set of competencies. They include the ability to (1) determine how much information is needed; (2) access it effectively and efficiently; (3) evaluate critically the reliability, currency, and appropriateness of information sources; and (4) understand the legal, economic, and social issues surrounding the use of information. Using these four points as goals has challenged the University Libraries to develop library solutions for students. At Western Michigan University, one key solution is an online tutorial called Searchpath.

The Problem of the WWW

Too often students think that all information is available on the Web, and that no other source for background materials is needed for their assignments. They find the Web quick and easy to use through one or more search engines or directories, e.g., Google or Yahoo, but they are not sufficiently aware of many of the Internet pitfalls. The Web pages that they readily locate may not provide the best information to support their research or, even worse, Web pages may provide incomplete, inaccurate, biased, or unreliable information.

Students also are unaware that a large part of the University Libraries' collection budget is used to purchase quality electronic resources—indexes and databases, periodicals, and even electronic books— that are delivered over the Web. These are resources that they will never find by using a popular search engine such as Google, because the proprietary materials purchased from companies can only be accessed by the WMU community and do not appear on the "public" Web. Students are understandably confused by the distinction between materials found on the free public Web and those on the "private" Web, since the Web is used as a delivery method for both. While the public Web is easy to use, its search engines retrieve a large number of irrelevant pages. In contrast, electronic indexes provided by the University Libraries give students access to better information including scholarly articles that have undergone a review process by trained professionals. However, to use these electronic indexes effectively, students need to learn the underlying strategies for searching indexed databases. They can then apply the strategies when they search different databases since each database may have a slightly different interface or search approach. In sum, our task in the University Libraries is to help students throughout the whole research process so that they know how to find information and how to filter and evaluate it to identify the best sources for their research.

Teaching students how to use library resources is a big job, and the University's rapidly growing enrollment makes the task increasingly difficult. Last fall there were 28,931 students enrolled at WMU, 23,156 of them as undergraduates. Our ultimate goal is to reach as many of these students as possible with our library instruction program, but we currently focus on freshmen and students in classes with a substantial writing or basic research component. Library presentations are tailored to instructors' assignments and to the class needs. Our classes are usually held in one of our two computer classrooms and are limited to a single hour with time built in for hands-on experience. However, with only ten reference librarians in the University Libraries providing the bulk of instruction, and given the need to offer instruction early in the term when it is most effective, it is impossible to meet with all students, even for one session, during the periods when classes are scheduled. As a result, even the scheduling logistics are difficult. For the past year, Searchpath has provided a solution to the problem of too many students, too many class needs, and too few library instructional specialists.

Creating Searchpath

Searchpath is the most technologically advanced of several tutorials developed by the Libraries' reference librarians in the last decade. In 1993, Pat VanderMeer produced our first HyperCard tutorial for a one-credit University orientation class. This was replaced in 1998 by Labyrinth, a Web-based tutorial developed by Judith Arnold and myself, which was followed by the first discipline-oriented tutorial, in Criminal Justice, authored by Pat VanderMeer. As the Libraries' Web presence grew, library liaisons prepared subject guides that provided a form of online education in different subject areas, and a number of "how to" guides were added to our Web pages. However, it was also evident that a much more student-oriented tutorial, making use of new technological enhancements, should attempt to begin the process of teaching information literacy.

In 2001, I applied for and received a one-year Teaching with Technology (TLT) grant from Western Michigan University to develop an online tutorial for students. The grant provided funding for some released time, assistance with HTML coding, and software. We began the project by defining our audience and the student proficiencies and skills we wanted them to acquire. We researched other library tutorials to identify the best ideas and examples on the Web. A tutorial developed for the University of Texas and its branches called the Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT, not to be confused with TILT) heavily influenced our work. In March 2001, TILT, nationally rec

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Searchpath... 
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ognized as probably the most innovative library tutorial, released its files under Open Publication License (OPL). By agreeing to credit its authors under the terms of the OPL, we had permission to use any of their images, HTML, and Flash files. While we originally thought we would simply adapt the TILT tutorial, our project became more ambitious. As we reorganized, rewrote, and wrote new content, and resized and replaced many of its images with our own, Searchpath took on a life of its own with a particular relationship to WMU.

As project manager and author, I was responsible for the content for Searchpath and created the graphics, but there are many people who had a hand in creating Searchpath. Maira Bundza is responsible for the HTML coding, for setting up the directory structure, and for technical problem solving of all kinds. She also supervised our student workers, Swati Narra and Sreetharan Kupusam, who did Java script and cookies coding, and David Kohrman who also did coding, as well as photography and image work. WMU's Media Production office created two short Flash movies for the tutorial and for the design for its opening page. Both students and faculty in Waldo Library's Central Reference department helped critique and test Searchpath as it was being developed, and the Libraries' administration was always in the wings with its strong support.

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The Searchpath Mission
Searchpath covers the research process from initial topic selection to citation styles and the issue of plagiarism. Searchpath is self-paced, and because it is on the Web, it can be accessed and used at any time by any student with an Internet connection whether in one of the libraries, at a computer lab, in student housing on-campus, or from a home computer. It was especially designed for freshmen in introductory-level classes such as English 105, BIS 142, and Engineering 102, but it is available to all students, including transfer students, distance learners, international students, and graduate students. To provide interactivity and to engage students in learning, Searchpath employs Flash movies, "live" database searching, a game to reinforce learning, and quizzes that furnish immediate feedback to students' answers.

The content is organized into six modules: (1) starting smart, an introductory overview that introduces students to various types of sources; (2) choosing a topic, which provides tips on broadening and narrowing a topic and discusses search concepts such as Boolean logic; (3) using WestCat, which has live practice searches in our online catalog; (4) finding articles, in which students can practice searching the Periodical Abstracts online database; (5) using the Web, which includes the comparative evaluation of Web sources; and (6) citing sources, a module that also includes the topics of plagiarism and copyright. Students can complete each of the six sections in about 15 minutes, either one module at a time or all in one sitting. Each module is followed by a short quiz, and the quiz results can be printed with the student's name and submitted to the instructor as proof of completion.

Use and Testing
Instructors who used Searchpath in last fall's pilot phase assigned extra credit points to students who completed Searchpath, and in the Winter semester, 2002, we began asking these instructors to assign Searchpath before bringing their students to the library for instruction sessions. Faculty members were pleased with the extra help that their students received and found Searchpath easy to incorporate into class requirements and grading. Instructional librarians, in turn, found that students who had completed Searchpath now had a context in which to place new information and were better able to assimilate the information presented in library sessions. In these sessions we can now review the basics they learned and spend more time on critical thinking and evaluation skills. This coming Fall semester we will be asking all instructors to assign Searchpath prior to bringing their classes to the library.

What's Next?
In June we followed TILT's example and released Searchpath files under Open Publication License. Our hope is that other academic librarians can adapt and use our work for the benefit of their students. As of August, five colleges have asked to use our files to adapt Searchpath for their institutions: Stanford University, Aquinas College, Lewis & Clark College, Alverno College, and the University of Central Oklahoma. The University of Michigan's Undergraduate Library, Lansing Community College, and Grand Valley State University have expressed their intention of downloading our files, and Johns Hopkins University has received permission to use our navigation system.

Recently, we added a survey to Searchpath to learn more about users' attitudes about the tutorial. In addition, we hope to begin some formal usability tests this fall. We will continue to update and refine Searchpath based upon the feedback we receive. Searchpath is at http://www.wmich.edu/library/searchpath. We invite you to take a look and to send us your comments on Searchpath by using the "input" link at the bottom of the page in each module.

Perhaps the best rewards for our work are the comments from our colleagues in the field. Two stand out—one from our own institution and one from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

"... Everyone in the Faculty Senate office was examining your website yesterday. It is absolutely gorgeous! We enjoyed it immensely, and you have done a great job."

Dr. Dean Johnson, Chair/TLT Grant Review Committee, Western Michigan University

"Searchpath is excellent! One of the best [tutorials] I've seen."

Dr. Evelyn Daniel, Professor and former Dean, School of Information & Library Science, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

"Learning without thought is useless; thought without learning is dangerous."

—Confucius, Analects
Mr. David Isaacson, Librarian
Waldo Library
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Dear Mr. Isaacson:

I'm quite proud to be remembered on the occasion of our centennial. I gave a lot of myself to this school and I'm very happy to see how much it has prospered. No, no, the credit is not all mine, of course. A university, let alone a college or normal school, is only outwardly a set of buildings: its students and faculty, however mortal, endure in a more meaningful way than its architecture. However, while I have the chance to reminisce and compare the old days to those one hundred years later, I do have some observations to make. Yes, you have my permission to share these thoughts with others.

First, thank you for naming the football stadium after me. When I bought 14 acres of swampy land for $12,000 in 1913, I did so to set aside the grounds for our students. Even then, I had to raise outside monies to purchase the land, divert Arcadia Creek across what is now called Stadium Drive, and develop playing areas. The superb Waldo Stadium that was built in the late 1930's for over $250,000 shows how much quality costs. I can't even imagine what is involved in the $25 million Seelye facility just opened. You may be interested to know that my first salary in 1904 was $2500 and that was raised, in slow increments, to $9000 in 1930. I suspect that President Elson S. Floyd needs a little bit more than that to live on? (Salary aside, I can't help but wonder why he has a last name that sounds like a first name. Is it because he seeks to imitate me? I would rather not have been called Mr. Waldo but had no choice in the matter!) But, getting back to Waldo Stadium, I must say that I was almost as proud of our athletic teams in the early days of Western as I was of our curriculum. I suspect I don't have to remind anyone of the old Greek notion of the union of a sound body with a sound mind.

On this same thought, I have nothing but good words to say about the Zest for Life program. I would recommend the University Administration require a physical fitness test for all faculty as one condition of their tenure. (I realize that you can't require a test for mental fitness so we can only hope that there is a strong relationship.) But I do not understand this new word "wellness." What does this word convey that the old word "health" does not? I am happy to see that one successor Dietrich Hauenlieck, at least, is careful about language use. But why did he let the perfectly good term Personnel Office become translated into the awful "Human Resources"? Is that to suggest that non-human resources are so important as to constitute everything else?

I also appreciate the fact that the old North Hall library that I dedicated in 1925 still continues to have a useful purpose to serve this many years later. It is being kept safe from rodents, I trust? And free, also, from the noxious effusions of the paper-making plants in town? I am disappointed to see the trolley up the hill to what you now call the East Campus has been torn down, but perhaps the exercise helps today's students. I am even happier, of course, to see that posterity has seen fit to honor me by naming the main library building Waldo Library. I hope what we used to say in my time is still true: the library is the heart of the university. And a vibrantly beating heart it should be, with veins, arteries, and even capillaries branching out to nourish the whole campus. Perhaps that is the intention of this new resource that I hear everyone talking about - it is called the World Wide Web, is it not? I do hope no malevolent spider is at the center of this Web. Its filaments are sticky, aren't they? Reaching out everywhere, predatory, getting entangled all over the University?

But back to the positive. I am also pleased to see that my old roll-top desk has found a home in the Special Collections area on the third floor of the library. If someone has discovered the hitherto hidden compartment in the desk that contains a little notebook of mine in which I noted some purely personal reflections, I would appreciate the preservation of my right to privacy. I understand that Thomas Amos, the Head of Special Collections, has appropriated this desk for his use. As long as he keeps my Abraham Lincoln Collection in good order and promises not to publish anything that might not reflect well on this institution, I wish him all the best use of this desk.

You will, I trust, understand that I am less than fully pleased that a drinking emporium has been named "Waldo's." In my day we were more discreet about the uses and, indeed, even more discreet about the abuses of alcohol. That students will imbibe spirits is not, in itself, necessarily a custom to deplore. That they will, at times, over-indulge is. No one, of course, consulted me before attaching my name to this establishment, whose propinquity to the University suggests, no doubt, that it has some official status, some at least semi-approved function. Not so. Not so. I do approve of a moderate amount of alcohol as an accompaniment to food or for the lifting of toasts on ceremonial occasions. I understand that the current Dean of Libraries, Joseph Reish, is an expert in the history and declamation of such toasts. Let him consider raising one to the man after whom his place of work is named. I promise him a handsome reward if he honors tradition in this way.

But we should not indulge in Bacchanalian excesses. While I disapproved (unofficially) of Prohibition, I equally disdain inebriation. Nor do I understand the attraction of a food we never had in my day. I think it is of Italian origin. Pizza you call it, don't you? And it is a staple of Waldo's tavern? This food seems to be as ubiquitous as hamburgers. I hope it is equally nutritious. What troubles me more, however, is the strange association of the name of my family with a popular series of books and

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games. I do not understand the widespread appeal of the “Where’s Waldo” books. I have been quite comfortably situated within my portrait here in Waldo Library all these years. I can assure you that I have never wanted for company standing here watching the passing show. I have become quite fond of watching the scholars and would-be-scholars as they enter and leave the library. So why would someone think I would enjoy having my good name conjoined with a children’s game the object of which is to locate, among hundreds of competing images, the one image that is supposed to resemble me? I can assure you that this inane cartoon character has nothing to do with me. Mind you, I’m not above caricature. I was skewered, roasted, and even scalded by ignorant fools in my time. It comes with the territory. No public leader can expect to be insulated from criticism. But this nonsensical child’s game - what point does it make about me? Should I ask the University attorney to initiate a libel suit? I might strike a number of people as being a mere ghost, a memory, only a monument to Tradition. But I must tell you that I am as solid as that 25-ton granite boulder from my home town of Allegan that was so laboriously moved to Kalamazoo to mark the eastern boundary of the campus, at the intersection of Oakland and Stadium Drives. Do I look like a man to be trifled with?

I am, not to put too fine a point upon it, amazed that people think they have to hunt through a maze to find a silly clown named Waldo. If they were really intent on getting the most out of their university education they have only to come into Waldo Library. Dwight B. Waldo is not hiding from anyone. From my portrait I see just about everyone who enters the library. But it is of no real consequence that you notice my portrait. I didn’t found Western State Normal School to build my own ego. I hope the purpose of this much larger University in 2003 carries on the basic tradition we started, in a humble but proud way, in 1903. Do I need to remind you that minds should be formed and characters built before careers are planned? In order to teach, students need first learn how to learn. That was our goal back when we started this little educational experiment in the strangely named town of Kalamazoo, Michigan. I am glad to see that a lot of teachers are still learning how to learn as well as learning how to teach. All the other subjects, disciplines, programs, and degrees grow from this basic faith in the power of education - not merely to inform with facts but more importantly to inspire with ideas.

Having said all that, let me end this discussion with my good wishes for your centennial year and my fervent hope to see even more intellectual progress at Western Michigan University in the next one hundred years.

With kindest regards,
Dwight B. Waldo

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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