"Shared Waters," Shared History
By Sharon Carlson, Director, Archives and Regional History Collections

An old adage states that "a friend in need is a friend indeed." Over the summer of 2005, the Friends of the University Libraries provided support for the University Libraries to host the traveling exhibit, "Shared Waters." Developed by the Fort Miami Heritage Society, of St. Joseph, MI, in conjunction with faculty and students from Western Michigan University, the exhibit had a very successful showing from 2003 to 2005 at the Priscilla U. Byrns Heritage Center in St. Joseph. A committee, made up of several faculty members involved in the initial project and headed by Dr. Nora Faires, Canadian Studies and Department of History, approached the Libraries' dean, Joseph G. Reish, about launching the traveling exhibit at Waldo Library.

The exhibit "Shared Waters" illustrates the convergence that occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries as Michigan and its surrounding Great Lakes served as a center for French colonial ambitions in the New World. Pre-historic glacial movement resulted in the Great Lakes, which supported an abundant variety of bird species and fur bearing animals. With the arrival of the French in the 1600s, a network of trade and social exchange developed that profoundly shaped the history of this region. Water routes linked missions, forts, and settlements on the lakeshore and at strategic river sites. This network included Fort Miami and Fort St. Joseph in southwest Michigan.

Waldo Library needed friends to host this first rate exhibit, and, ultimately, the generous financial support from the Friends of the University Libraries made it possible. Much work had to be accomplished over the spring and summer of 2005. One obstacle that nobody predicted involved mounting the exhibit panels. Originally created for the facilities at the Priscilla U. Byrns Heritage Center at the Fort Miami Heritage Society, initial attempts to install them at Waldo Library were discouraging. At one point, committee members questioned whether the traveling exhibit would move forward. Thanks to the perseverance of Regina Buckner, Director of Operational Services in the Libraries, and the ingenuity of WMU's Physical Plant, temporary mounts allowed the panels to be attached to the walls of the library atrium for the duration of the exhibit. Committee members also secured the original artifacts, negotiated new loan agreements, and created exhibit labels. Additional support for the exhibit and related activities came from several WMU offices including the Office of the President, the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for International and Area Studies, the College of Education, the Department of Anthropology, the Department of History and its Canadian Studies Program, and the Environmental Studies Program. Loaned artifacts came from the Fort Miami Heritage Society, Fort St. Joseph Museum, Kalamazoo Valley Museum, and Mackinac State Historic Parks.

All the efforts paid off when "Shared Waters" opened to an enthusiastic crowd of about 125 on September 9, 2005. Dr. Conrad Heidenreich, York University, Toronto, provided a program to a capacity crowd in the Stewart Clock Tower. President Judith Bailey presided over a ribbon cutting ceremony that included Dennis Moore, Public Affairs Officer of the Consulate General of Canada; Michel Lafleur, Québec Representative for the Midwest; Michigan Senator Tom George; Kalamazoo Mayor Robert Jones; and President Emeritus Diether Haenicke.

Several classes within and outside the University have incorporated "Shared Waters" into their curriculums. Most notably, Dr. Toni Woolfork-Barnes, director of Western's First Year Experience Program has included the exhibit as a recommended activity for the 600 students enrolled in this new program. K-12 groups may use the curriculum materials originally developed by the Fort Miami Heritage Society with assistance from Western Michigan University students. Curriculum experts from the University and Kalamazoo Public Schools also developed...
In Defense of Bookworms

By David Isaacson,
Professor & Humanities Librarian

I am a bookworm. I say this proudly, but also a bit warily. Bookworms belong to the same genus as booklovers, but we are in a separate species. Librarians have traditionally catered to booklovers. After all, many librarians are themselves booklovers. But not all of us who know we are bookworms are ready to come out of the closet. I’m going to risk outing myself here.

I’m not a literal bookworm, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a kind of maggot, which destroys books by eating its way through the leaves.” However, I am the figurative kind, which the same learned source defines as “one who seems to find his chief sustenance in reading, one who is always poring over books.” It surprised me to learn that the first recorded allusion to a literal bookworm was not until 1855, although as early as 1599 Ben Jonson, in The Fountain of Selfe-Leve, or Cynthia’s Revels, refers to the human variety when he describes a character as being “perverted and spoiled by a whoreson bookworm.”

Neither kind of bookworm gets a good press. From Jonson’s time on, the figurative bookworm has been regarded as at best eccentric, but sometimes downright crazy. To add insult to injury, it seems that the insect bookworm that actually destroys books is named after the human being who treasures them. I’m usually on a soapbox defending animals against all the vile associations with which we metaphorize them: the dirty pig, the skulking dog, and the sneaky cat. But human bookworms do no harm to books. In fact, some books, like Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy, were written just for us.

One can only speculate about the origin of this word. Whether Ben Jonson made up the term or borrowed it, back in Elizabethan days, when books were much scarcer, people who were overfond of books were said to be worming their way into them. Worms serve a useful purpose in nature. Worms who literally eat books can be presumed to be doing so because the cellulose and glue are tasty (and nutritious). We don’t have to go further than Francis Bacon’s famous essay “Of Studies,” with memorable lines like “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested,...” to realize the profound accuracy of this association of reading and eating. Human bookworms find sustenance by consuming books, but even when we have to eat our words we don’t usually masticate actual books.

I bet someone who was not a bookworm created this epithet to mock someone who was. My guess is that the person who first used this term was an illiterate or semi-literate lazy person who envied the bookworm’s elated state. Not willing to admit he didn’t have such an ability himself, this killjoy pretended that the bookworm was what Jonson calls a “verse whoreson.” Prejudiced people put bookworms in the same mental sideshow as nerds, dweebs, wonks, pointy-headed intellectuals, absent-minded professors, and other wierdos, who, they insist, don’t have real lives.

The Bookworm: aka David Isaacson

Direct manifestations of this prejudice help to make us bookworms even wormier. My preference for reading over most other activities goes way back to childhood. I preferred to read because I liked taking imaginary trips. I was not an especially odd or lonely kid. But I think I was even more self-absorbed than many other kids were. At this point in my life I don’t know or care whether my bookworminess was more the cause or the effect of self-preoccupation. But I still feel as if I need to justify my passion for reading, even though, as a librarian, I make my living tending to bookish things.

Later, from about junior high on, most people get the idea that a lot of reading should be serious. We bookworms say we agree with this, but this is just a dodge. What a drink is to an alcoholic a book is to a bookworm. The normal book reader has other things to do with his life—even if he is a college professor and is paid to read. But the bookworm is obsessed. Reading is an end-in-itself. The non-addicted reader enjoys reading, but also enjoys other things. The bookworm, on the other hand, does not want to come down from his reading high. To be deprived of a book is to suffer withdrawal. A bookworm without anything to read starts to get nervous and itchy. Deprive us of print too long and we may have panic attacks about where our next reading fix is coming from.

Non-bookworms cannot really empathize with us. Where they might get tired if they’ve been too long with Mark Twain down the Mississippi, bookworms resent coming back. Reading something is more important than reading any particular thing. If I can’t have Twain, I will settle for Agatha Christie. In a pinch, a Harlequin romance is better than no book at all. Any kind of reading—even in a language I don’t understand—is better than no print at all.

There are stages of bookwormishness. The first stage—a mere preference for reading over other activities—is virtually indistinguishable from bookloverliness. But the second stage—when one just has to be reading something, anything, in print—at a certain time every day—is a critical turning point. The third stage is the reading binge. For some, this is an occasional spree of round-the-clock reading. For others, bingeing occurs every day. Bookworms frequently are in denial. They make quite a fuss over saying to others that they prefer television or some other pastime to reading. But the non-bookworm does not have to ration his reading, or fixate on where he will find his next book, newspaper, or magazine. Some bookworms, disguising themselves as book connoisseurs, will talk a good line about loving special books, or certain authors, or only liking to read at certain times of the day. Don’t believe them. The real bookworm has to read an hour or two before leaving the house to go to the library to study, because she just can’t be sure even the library has enough books for her, or will give her all she wants when she wants them.

Bookworms in the last stage of this cunning disease are completely anti-social. Now, a bookstore or library becomes threatening and oppressive. The pure bookworm does not have time or patience to talk to other people. He resents having to emerge from whatever reading matter has him enthralled at the moment. Even the company of fellow bookworms is frustrating. Locked into an imaginary life bounded by a book, the bookworm does not want to share that world with anyone else. Any other person may be a false friend, one who might try to steal her book. The bookworm re-make of the movie Leaving Las Vegas would be one long, progressively more depraved and disgusting gulping and gorging of books,

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A Treasure of Viewing

By Miranda Haddock,
Head, Visual Resources Library

I still think of moving images as a treat in the classroom. And, the news gets even better since instructors are using more and more moving image media today than they did ten years ago when the “film” collection became part of the University Libraries. In fact, the faculty at Western Michigan University is using 77% more videos per annum than they did in 2000. Overall usage of the collection has increased by 200% in the ten years the Libraries has been administering the collection. Fortunately, the collection of moving image media has grown along with use of the collection. To date, there are over 5000 videos, 450 DVDs, and 410 16 mm film titles available for classroom use. Sara Wick, Coordinator, provides assistance to users of the Collection, which is located in 3305 Sangren.

The Moving Image Collection

As in most academic library collections, the materials contained in the Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection reflect what is being taught at the institution. Faculty request instructional videos that highlight their subject specialties. The collection ranges from the life sciences with titles like Life’s Greatest Miracle, featuring Lennart Nilsson’s groundbreaking photographic techniques, to the visual arts with the The Indiana Murals of Thomas Hart Benton. Just as instructional moving images come in several formats (videotape, DVD, 16 mm film, etc.), they also take many forms of visual expression including traditional documentaries, animated lessons, and feature films. Often selected titles are:

- Dead Birds, a semi-documentary produced by the Film Study Center of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University from a 1961-63 expedition to study the living habits of the Dani people in West New Guinea;
- Animate Neuroscience & the Action of Nicotine, Cocaine, and Marijuana in the Brain, an instructional video using 3-D animation to demonstrate a specific lesson;
- Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (The Lovers on the Bridge), a 1991 French film, has optional English subtitles making it an ideal “listening” film for students learning French;
- Kumonosu-jo (Throne of Blood) in Japanese and Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios (Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown), for those studying these languages;
- The Goddess and the Computer examines traditional Balinese rice farming beliefs and mathematical models, a film that might be used in a variety of classes ranging from art history to religion to mathematics to management;
- Oh, What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me! explores how mass media effect indigenous people;
- Borderline, a documentary on Detroit’s 8 Mile Road, and Beyond the Veil, which shows diversity within Islam, might be used by Political Science, Anthropology, and Sociology;
- The Smell of Burning Ants demonstrates how boys are socialized by our culture, a useful viewing for both psychology and sociology; and
- Spin the Bottle examines the college party scene and how it influences thoughts on gender and alcohol—a valuable viewing for several of the social sciences.

Literary holdings in the Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection are equally varied. The collection contains BBC titles on Dylan Thomas, Ernest Hemingway, George Elliott, and a series of 39 productions of Shakespeare’s work. Writers are also represented by other production companies as well. Some of the authors whose life and work are represented are Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Octavio Paz, Louise Erdrich, and Michael Dorris. This collection holds literature that has been interpreted for film. A few titles that immediately come to mind are Great Expectations, Name of the Rose, Cyrano de Bergerac, Jane Eyre, and Grapes of Wrath.

Multidepartmental Appeal

As mentioned above, many of the titles held in our collection appeal to more than one department. Many of what are considered “high use” moving image titles are used repeatedly by more than one department. The heavy use of some titles requires that we have more than one copy of these titles. WGBH-Boston and Blackside Productions’ Eyes on the Prize receives more use than any other title. The film is popular with Sociology, Political Science, History, and Africana Studies. Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity is regularly used by Sociology, Communications, and Women’s Studies. Killing Us Softly, focusing on the media and images of women, and The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter are two other titles that have been used by multiple programs such as Women’s Studies, History, and Sociology.

Even though a movie image production may have originally been targeted to one type of audience, often it becomes used by more than one audience. Dreamworlds was at first marketed to those in the Communications discipline. However, it is a useful title for other areas of study that analyze the effects of visual pop culture on our young people. Education, Sociology, Social Work, and Women’s Studies are examples of other subject areas that could benefit from this work, and, for that reason, such titles become very high use videos. Bread and Roses was produced and distributed as a feature film, but in the academic classroom it becomes a vehicle for discussion on labor relations, illegal aliens, and large corporations.

Some of our high use titles are not only used well in the classroom, but are also used in training sessions by administrative offices around campus as well.

Departments, offices, and organizations that train student assistants on campus use Fish and Fish Sticks, motivational videos produced by ChartHouse International Learning Corporation.

Moving Images and Teaching

Videos, DVDs, and 16 mm films are used in many different ways in the classroom. A professor of acting may use different versions of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. For example, the 1948 rendering with Sir Laurence Olivier as Hamlet and the 1996 adaptation with Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet illustrate how different actors (and directors) have chosen to interpret the character. Novels are often made into feature films, but require rewriting as a screenplay. The Razor’s Edge might be used in a Communications or Creative Writing class to demonstrate how screenplay writing differs from an already well-established, published novel. Other feature films by directors known for their artistic framing of images, Alfred
Hitchcock’s Rear Window and Ingmar Bergman’s Wild Strawberries immediately come to mind, would be used in classes focusing on the art of the moving image, camera, or directing technique. Literature and foreign language faculty might select a documentary on a particular writer being studied, perhaps an American literature class would include Alice Walker: Author or one of the many interviews with Toni Morrison.

Members of the faculty prepare assignments around the content of videos and DVDs. Marlene Breu, an Associate Professor in Family and Consumer Sciences, notes that she requires students, after viewing a video, to write a reaction paper or critique of the film or to participate in a group discussion. Exams often include questions or essays built around the content of a video that has been viewed. Sometimes a video can condense a subject and explain a concept in 10 minutes when it would take an instructor 30 minutes to explain the same material. Since videos are a visual media, students who are visual learners have more opportunity to assimilate a topic. Films and other moving image media provide both visual and auditory stimuli, aspects that can go beyond the ordinary lecture. Political Science professor Susan Hoffmann uses Fritz Lang’s Metropolis to show the effects of the industrialization process. Students remember the regimented workers whose lives are bound by the manufacturing machinery and time clock.

According to Marlene Breu, Family and Consumer Sciences, videos serve as “virtual field trips.” In her class, Apparel and Textile Studies, it is important for students to have an understanding of the textile manufacturing process. Since textile production plants are not available in Michigan or nearby in neighboring states, Dr. Breu uses videos to show textile processing.

For a number of years, the collection was open to faculty only. However, this has changed and students are now able to check out videos for their personal or group study. The graphic content of videos, DVDs, and film can complement what is taught in class or are good references for a research paper in addition to traditional print resources. For example, two videos, Hawaii, the Pacific Paradise and Manas: the Spirit of Our People, provide excellent visual, historical, and cultural background for students focusing on Polynesia for a research paper. Occasionally, students find it difficult to understand works of literature. A student trying to understand the poetry of Ezra Pound would benefit from viewing Ezra Pound, a work that includes biographical information as well as an explanation of his influence on modern literature. Viewing a feature film derived from a work of literature may also help a student frame the story mentally before actually reading the book. A lengthy tome such as Name of the Rose comes to mind, although viewing a film instead of reading a book for a course is not recommended by this author. With the ChartHouse documentary and well researched feature films, with historical themes is an excellent method for students to gain the feel or clothing, housing, and other aspects of past lifestyles.

Maintaining Our Valuable Collection

Moving image collections, as do book, audio, photograph, and slide collections, require watchful maintenance. In 2003, the Library installed new shelving specifically designed for video and DVD collections. This shelving is more compact and can hold more items than conventional library shelving. With the collection growing in number of items and use, efficient storage is very important.

When a title is damaged, worn out, or lost, the Visual Resources Library makes every effort to replace it. To safeguard against damage, we view each title when it arrives to make sure it operates correctly and that the images and sound are not damaged. Rarely do we have to return a title due to poor technical quality. However, we have found that, on occasion, sound defects don’t become apparent until a tape is viewed in a large lecture hall. When this occurs, we then make every effort to obtain a copy with better sound. The staff of the Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection have been trained to make sure videos and films are rewound properly and that the surfaces of the DVDs are intact.

Many of the titles purchased for our collection cost well over $500 for a single title as, for example, the ChartHouse International Learning Corporation materials. Sets of videos with two or more tapes or DVDs cost well over $1000 and sometimes up to the $5000 range. One of the realities of maintaining a collection of instructional materials is that some titles are copied in small numbers or go out of print, making them difficult to replace. Eyes on the Prize, a series of 28 tapes produced by WGBH in Boston, is one of the more heavily used series in our collection. In order to replace this series, the Acquisitions Department would need to spend many hours and hundreds of dollars just to locate a used copy of one of the tapes.

In order to preserve our important collection that so closely reflects the undergraduate and graduate curricula of Western Michigan University, the Library has specific use and circulation policies in place. The policies allow access to the collection by all WMU faculty, staff, and students who wish to use the materials for educational purposes associated with the University. The Library licenses the videos and DVDs for University use only. License agreements do not permit moving image materials to be used for film festivals or other activities of the broader Kalamazoo community. Complete policies are available through the Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection home page.

This past year, etc. strict use policies and fees have been put into place to discourage users from holding onto materials after the due date. As a result, circulation statistics have gone up, with more and more departments demonstrating interest in the use of moving images in teaching. Our stricter policies require that patrons return their materials on time so that other members of our WMU community can use them. Since these policies have been in place, there are fewer overdue and lost titles than previous years.

Services

The Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection offers a variety of services to faculty and students. Instructors can make advance reservations through the University Libraries’ Web site to ensure that a video or DVD will be available for class when needed. Materials, including manuals that accompany some titles, can be renewed for one week if an instructor needs more time. Generally, videos and DVDs must be checked out from the collection in 3305 Sangren, but arrangements can be made to have the videos picked up in the Harper C. Maybee Music and Dance Library. Moving image materials can be returned to Waldo Library or any of the four branch libraries. Instructors can also place videotapes on reserve so that students can view the video in small groups in one of the several viewing rooms available in the Education Library.

Anyone in the University community can request a moving image title for purchase although budget limitations give priority to requests that relate to WMU academic programs and curricula. A recommendation form can be found on the Videotape, DVD, and 16 mm Film Collection home page. Purchases can also be made through the University Libraries’ subject liaisons.

In order to assist patrons in locating titles in the moving image collection, a “how to” guide for searching WestCat, the Libraries’ online catalog for all collections, is also available on the Collection’s home page, http://www.wmich.edu/library/film. All titles in the moving image collection can be found through basic searches in WestCat, e.g. by title, Library of Congress subject, etc. The guided keyword searches in WestCat can be specifically limited to items in the moving images collection. The search, once limits are set, will identify all of the titles in our collection that are, as the old saying might be paraphrased, “moving pictures worth thousands of words.” Come and see for yourself our “treasure of viewing.”
The Art of the Artist’s Book

By Samantha J. Cairo, Former Coordinator, Special Collections

Books are, and ever will be, one of the most useful and glorious creative works of all time. As a form, they have been around since roughly 200 CE, and will likely continue well past the age of the Internet and digitization. There is something almost awe-inspiring about holding a book whose text speaks to you through the ready access of its portable availability. I do not recall my very first encounter with a book, but I do remember the first time I made one. Perhaps it was not the masterpiece I had envisioned when I began, but at that tender age, I still realized how much fun books were to make.

There were other attempts over the next few years in which I tried to recapture the “brilliance” of my first experience, but each newly made “book” never quite became the masterpiece I envisioned. Then, five years ago, I took the job of Coordinator of Special Collections in WMU’s Libraries, and began again in earnest to create books.

My incentive to “make a book” was partially developed during a period when I was working on a master’s degree in Medieval Studies at the University. While earning the degree, I had many opportunities to examine “real” medieval masterpieces. I was also inspired by my job in Special Collections, which required repairing and caring for old books. Moreover, I had the opportunity to examine rare editions and artist’s books as well as books with unusual formats and shapes. Further, there were dozens of catalogs of all kinds of rare and unusual books; each provided a wealth of ideas about making a book. As a result of recreating a medieval manuscript, complete with 12th century calligraphy, and an embossed cover. It was not the illuminated manuscript I had first dreamt of making, but it was a good “effort” and has prepared the way for the more complex “medieval” manuscript that will come.

I have learned many valuable techniques and discovered new ideas from each attempt at book making. I have seen catalogs of artist’s books for sale and I have examined each unusual book that Special Collections has purchased over the years. Catalogs and other artists’ books have been the most influential force on my work. I see a design and think, “Wouldn’t it be better if...” or I am inspired by other random visual occurrences. Sometimes a text demands a particular format; sometimes you have to find a text for a format just discovered. The problem is, though, once you start making books, you always have another idea for a new and different creation. But, as with all creative efforts, each new effort challenges me to start anew. After all these years, I can hardly imagine a better way to spend my free time than “making books.” Or, if I were to quote another artist, it might be Henry James who said:

“It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of the process.”

—Letter to H.G. Wells, 10 July 1915

(Samantha Cairo left her position as Coordinator in Special Collections in October 2005, and is now living in California.)

PHOTOS: Samantha Cairo and “her” books

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additional resources, including materials geared toward university students. These resource materials are available to teachers and faculty interested in incorporating "Shared Waters" into classroom activities.

Experience "Shared Waters" for yourself. The exhibit includes numerous panels with text and artwork from 25 museums and archives in the United States, Canada, and France. The artifacts include some spectacular pieces of trade silver on loan from several museums. One particularly striking artifact is a birch bark canoe constructed using traditional methods. A canoe cradle, developed by WMU’s Physical Plant, provides a wonderful venue for viewing the interior and exterior of this artifact. It has proved to be extremely popular with all of the groups visiting the exhibit. The exhibit is located on the second and third floors of Waldo Library and will be in place through the end of February 2006. For additional information on the exhibit or to schedule a group tour, please contact Kathy Gerow, University Libraries, at 269-387-5202.

newspapers, scholarly journals, popular magazines, newsletters, printouts, leaflets, cereal boxes—anything in print.

Fortunately, there is help for bookworms, and for those who care for them. But it must start with a sincere, complete decision by the bookworm himself to give up all forms of excessive reading. For years I was able to hide my addiction to reading from family, friends, and colleagues. But I could not, finally, hide my addiction from myself. In the last years of my increasingly downward spiral, I lost all sense of reality unmediated by reading. I finally attended a meeting of Bookworms Anonymous. I am not going to say anything more about this organization that saved my life because I don’t want to risk compromising it, or my own biblio-sobriety.

But I do want to thank all my fellow librarians who supported me during this sometimes agonizing period of recovery. The first days and weeks of carefully rationed reading are horrible! Bookworms typically need a lot of time to come to terms with a world that seems empty without the constant reading we thought we had to have. But, one day at a time, a normal reading life begins to seem livable, and then, by slow degrees, wonderful. I have finally discovered that I don’t have to hide from the world in a book. There are many books I will never read. That’s OK. Conversely, some books, I’m convinced, probably will get along, “equally OK,” without my reading them. I think it’s even safe for me to attend a library convention again, although I cannot trust myself just yet at all those publishers’ booths. I can have a few books, of course, but not nearly as many as I thought I needed. Now I have the capacity to choose books. Before, books chose me.

If this sounds familiar to any reader I encourage her or him to call, write or e-mail me. You don’t have to suffer alone. Together, we can survive without being hopeless bookworms!

[David Isaacson, Professor and Humanities Librarian in the University Libraries, came to WMU in 1973 and is retiring, after 32 years of service, in January 2006. He has been a major contributor to Gatherings since it was first published, and will, one hopes, continue to bring his love of reading and writing to future issues as he ventures beyond library walls to the wider world.]