WMU’s 21st Century Libraries

By Bettina Meyer,
Assistant Dean for Resources

Over the last 20 years, developing the University Libraries’ collections for Western Michigan University’s students and faculty has been an adventure racing into the future, embracing the past, and striving to meet the challenges brought about by technology. Collection development has gone beyond selection of a book or journal with the expectation of seeing it in the library’s stacks. Technological advances and the increasing availability of online books, journals, music, and databases have expanded the options for developing collections.

The challenges for an academic library continue to be many and are sure to become even more challenging in the future. The means to “access” print resources may remain the same (purchasing outright, subscribing, borrowing, etc.) or, as occurs more and more often, the option for online access is increasingly available. For online resources, one must be able to negotiate pricing, license agreements, or contracts with multiple publishers and vendors who exist within several competitive markets. Within such agreements are issues of identification of authorized users, number of users, technical requirements, copyright and legal use for electronic reserves, archival rights, course packs, interlibrary loan, and usage statistics. Always at the forefront is how to provide the resources needed to support WMU’s academic programs and research whether offered on campus, at extended university sites, or through distance education.

Print AND Online in Today’s Library

Traditionally published books, that is, printed “paper” copies, continue to be the main format in the University Libraries. However, for over a decade, e-books, notably NetLibrary and eBrary and, more recently, Books24x7 and Safari Tech Books Online, as well as several other sources, supplement the print collections and are used for electronic reserves and research. During the same period, the Libraries has acquired several print collections of note. Two such collections are (1) the Sternberg collection of books of art, exhibit catalogs, and auction catalogs, and (2) a large collection of books on the history of China. Both the Archives and Regional History Collections and the Special Collections and rare books department continue to acquire primary source books, manuscripts, and collections in print. These highly desirable print titles bring unique research materials to University programs and curricula.

Electronic resources have greatly improved access to library materials without a user setting foot in the University Libraries. The Libraries’ Web site is open 24/7 and provides the night owl and off campus student options not previously available. Even more important is the fact that the depth and breadth of collections have been enhanced with primary source database collections such as those offered by the Alexander Street Press’s North American Women's Letters and Diaries, North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories, and Black Thought and Culture. Music collections are now available online from the Naxos Music Library, Classical Music Online, Smithsonian Global Sound, and African American Song while the online Sanborn Maps 1867-1970 provides access to 300 Michigan towns and cities drawn at a scale of 50 feet to the inch, including street blocks and building numbers.

Ever-expanding Accessibility

Cooperative collection development in the online environment has become a way

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to expand library resources beyond the
library budget. Participating Michigan
academic libraries cooperate in the provi-
sion of several electronic journal collec-
tions by pooling their subscriptions
allowing each library access to the online
holdings of the other institutions in addi-
tion to the institution’s subscribed journ-
als. Examples of such collections include
the multidisciplinary journals published
by Blackwell Publishing, Elsevier Ltd.,
Springer Verlag, and Wiley Interscience.
On a statewide basis, the Michigan
eLibrary (http://www.mel.org/), devel-
oped by the Library of Michigan, provides
access to multiple electronic databases to
all the citizens of Michigan. On a national
basis, academic libraries throughout the
United States participate in a cooperative
license agreement for access to the
LexisNexis Academic Universe database.
Cooperation in other areas of collection
development has been a standard princi-
ple for many years. Western Michigan
University Libraries is a member of the
Center for Research Libraries, a consor-
tium of North American universities, col-
leges and independent research libraries.
“The Center’s mission is to support
advanced research and teaching in the
humanities, sciences, and social sciences
by ensuring the survival and availability
of the knowledge resources vital to these
disciplines.” (www.cri.edu/) Consortium
members annually submit and vote on
proposed purchases of materials too
expensive to purchase individually yet
are held by fewer than five libraries. All
Center materials are available to members
through interlibrary loan. Through its
membership in the Center, the University
Libraries has also participated with other
members in the cooperative acquisition of
Digitale Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker, an
electronic edition of the Bibliothek
deutscher Klassiker, which contains the
highpoints of German literature.

Resource Building Principles & Practices

The University Libraries houses
diverse collections of printed and elec-
tronic materials that complement the pro-
grams and research of the institution,
WMU, that it serves. The Libraries also
supports the acquisition of unique collec-
tions related to the programs and research
needs of the southwestern Michigan
community in which the University is geographically located.
Thus, the Libraries serves as a depository
for regional materials, and, in so doing,
provides a unique archival source for
materials that would otherwise be lost.
For example, the manuscript records of

southwestern Michigan and regional gov-
ernmental records are held in the
Archives and Regional History Collec-
tions library located on the East Campus.
As a result, this special collection pro-
vides unique access to the history of the
region. The Special Collections and rare
books department, Waldo Library,
acquires rare and unique resources in a
number of areas that are closely tied to
University programs. The Cistercian and
Monastic Studies Collections, the
Medieval Studies Collections, the
Historical Children’s Collection, and the
Carol Ann Haenicke American Women’s
Poetry Collection are just a few of the spe-
cial collections that have a strong relation-
ship to the University and local research
needs.

Digitizing and Building for the Future

The uniqueness of the University
Libraries’ resources as described in its
online catalogs and databases means that
rare and fragile materials are more easily
located. Some materials are very fragile
and deteriorating and here is where collection
taking a different turn. Digitizing
rare and fragile resources can preserve
their content and assure future genera-
tions access. Currently, the Libraries’
Digitization Center is completing a
Library of Michigan funded project to
digitize eight Civil War diaries that were
written in pencil and, over the years, have
been fading away. While preserving the
original documents, students and others
will have access to the content as it was
written.

Other changes in collection develop-
ment are really a reflection of some 100
years of changes in technology. The
results greatly improve the ability of
WMU’s academic libraries to provide
resources beyond what we may be able to
provide on a permanent basis. The ser-
vices available include the decades old
interlibrary loan, which provides for the
borrowing and lending of books and arti-
cles between libraries. Today’s ILL service
may involve purchasing an article from a
vendor or obtaining it under fair use from
another library and borrowing a book for
the researcher. In all cases, interlibrary
loan supplements collection building by
supplying data on usage and copyright
compliance. Such information assists in
the evaluation of a resource for purchase
or subscription. Circulation data from the
Libraries’ own collections are also
used to evaluate and assist in collection
development.

New to collection development at
WMU is the implementation of the
statewide union catalog, MeLcAt, formed
under the auspices of the Library of
Michigan. Participation in MeLcAt makes
accessible all the collections of all partici-
pating Michigan libraries: the goal is to
provide better service to the residents of
Michigan no matter where they are in the
state. The MeLcAt database also allows
collection development librarians to
assess what is already available locally
and statewide and to build collections
that add to resources available within the
state rather than duplicating copies.

Of course, no commentary on building
a 21st century library is complete until
one notes the thousands upon thousands
of Web sites of interest that can be found
when one “googles” his or her area of
interest. For the collection development
librarian, Web sites are part of the selec-
tion process that a librarian uses to make
a critical judgment of the value of the site
to support WMU’s programs and research. Digitized collections such as
the WMU Civil War Diaries abound.
Selecting and cataloging the best of these
collections has become part of building a
collection.

And...
in summary, collections built today
encapsulate the print and electronic books,
periodicals, subject collections, visual
materials in multiple formats, Web sites,
unique and rare materials, book and arti-
dle delivery, digitized collections, and
the next technological innovation that stores
information. In one way, nothing has
changed for there have always been mul-
tiple formats available throughout our
civilized history. But the parameters of
“ownership” have definitely been rede-
dined. The proliferation of information in
all formats has charged collection devel-
omp librarians to:

• develop experience in licensing and
contracts,
• gain significant knowledge of copy-
right law,
• secure knowledge of archival rights
management and access,
• develop knowledge of digitization,
• work easily in a team environment
for subject collection responsibilities, and
• have extensive skill in budget man-
agement.

“All in a day’s work” invokes multiple
competencies, seldom if ever taught in
graduate library and information science
programs, when it describes the 21st aca-
demic library world of collection develop-
ment. If almost two decades of experience
can be encapsulated, my final comment
would be that “The life of this collections
development librarian has been interest-
ing, exceptionally challenging, and very
rewarding!”
And Gladly Collect...
By Sharon Carlson, Director, Archives and Regional History Collections

There is an interesting, even intriguing story of "why here, why now?" behind many of the collections housed in the Archives and Regional History Collections. Obviously, many of the collections contain unique materials, which, of course, entice those of us who are curators. But, on occasion, the rationale for the actual acquisition of a collection is equally interesting and that small piece of history may not be apparent to researchers. Indeed, patrons frequently ask how collections come to be placed in an archive. There is no single answer that may be given to this question, but the acquisition of almost every collection has at least one or more causative elements.

To begin this tale is to note that collections arrive due to differing circumstances. In the best case scenario, the creator of the documents makes a decision that he or she would like to donate papers to expand the University's Archives—usually because "there" they will be preserved. This may be some years after the documents were created, and typically occurs when somebody is cleaning or perhaps downsizing and decides that his or her papers may be of value to researchers. In many instances, this is the best of circumstances for acquiring papers. The archivist has the opportunity to ask questions about the papers and activities associated with them. The archivist also has an opportunity to get biographical information from the donor that helps to evaluate the potential uses of the collection and identify the researchers who would find this particular collection worth examining.

Some recent additions of this nature have included materials donated by Glen Bachelder and Lance Ferraro. Bachelder grew up in Kalamazoo and had a long and distinguished career in Lansing, working for several governors. He started organizing and donating his family and genealogical papers to the Archives in 2006. He is in the process of doing the same for his professional papers.

Lance Ferraro, our second donor example, operated a local photography studio and was very involved politically from the 1970s to the 1990s. Over a period of many years, he has donated records associated with his business as well as files from some of the committees he participated on, including the Citizens for Responsible Rail Consolidation and Urban Development. In both instances, we in the archives have enjoyed getting to know the donors and have been able to ask them questions about the papers. This is perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of archival work.

A variation of this form of gift occurs when the creator of the papers is no longer living and a family member or, perhaps, a personal representative decides to donate the papers. This scenario almost always offers fewer opportunities to learn more about the papers. Depending on the relationship the current donor has to the creator of the papers or collection, information about the contents varies considerably. In the 1960s, Western Michigan University acquired the papers of Caroline Bartlett Crane from her granddaughter. In this instance, the family had considerable knowledge of Crane and could answer questions as the collection was processed for researchers.

Both instances of when and by whom the collection is donated may require site visits. The University Libraries van has been used in several instances to collect papers at a home or business because it is not always possible for donors to bring boxes to the Archives. Sometimes the document retrieval occurs at a stressful time for the donor, especially if a physical move or a death has brought about the decision to donate materials. However, the benefit of retrieving papers from a home or business is that it may well provide additional information about the donor or the history of a business or organization. We especially find that retrieving records from a business location provides information not available in other locations. Yet, when retrieving papers from a family home, there may be additional clues about the tastes and interests of the donor—or friends and relatives who can add an extra dimension to the documents' value.

In a few instances, the University Archives personnel have, literally, been given the key to a house or building and told how much time could be spent to gather, pack, and remove the papers. The first time this occurred, we had three days to clear all donated materials from a house. The donor of the papers was recently deceased and had not lived in the house for several years. The large two-story house in Kalamazoo's Vine neighborhood contained one hundred years of professional and personal papers of a prominent nineteenth century family. The donor left a large portion of her estate to Western Michigan University and stipulated that her family papers be donated to the Archives. The estate executor did not know much about the history of the family, but was well acquainted with the donor. The papers included considerable information about the family and additional valuable information was gathered through research.

Retrieving collections may involve several trips and provide unique opportunities to view buildings that would not be typically open to the public. Beginning in 2005, staff of the Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections received a call from former employees involved in clearing out records from the building that had housed the Engineering Department of the Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Paper Company. The equipment had been removed and sold, and the appropriate owners had removed legal papers. What remained included photographs and drawings of equipment and buildings associated with the several paper...
companies that had operated on that site as well as community buildings. The building where the papers had been kept had, unfortunately, experienced some leaks and had not been heated. As a result, our team of “removal archivists” had some physical challenges to meet!

The first phase of this particular acquisition involved relocating all the materials from their vulnerable environment in one building to a more stable building on the plant’s compound. Once removed from the first location, every item or container has had to be sorted and examined to determine if the record poses a hazard such as the presence of mold. If it does have a problem, that archive must be removed and set apart or destroyed. This evaluative procedure has already taken over two years and will not be finished until summer of 2007. Besides the number of records that have had to be examined, moved, and evaluated, the project has taken extra time because all the buildings housing the records are unheated. As a result, the project has been abandoned during the coldest winter months. Despite this setback, we have had the advantage of being able to see where a key historical industry of Kalamazoo once thrived. Moreover, we have had the expertise of several retirees, Joe Chadderdon and Don Davoust, in particular, who have been able to tell us about the papermaking operations and how the records relate to the once-thriving industry activities that occurred in this now dilapidated place.

One always-intriguing aspect of being a collector of archival family and business papers is that we never know what will be encountered when sorting through a person’s personal papers. One of the more interesting things that we have uncovered is human hair, usually small locks from children although, in one instance, we discovered a very thick brown braid. In this instance, photographs provided documentation that allowed us to make a good guess as to whom it belonged. Photos of the donor through her early teen years revealed that she had beautiful brown hair and often wore a single braid. Later photos from the 1920s indicate that she opted to cut her hair in the popular bob style of that era, but as often occurred, the braid was cut off as a unit and kept with other family mementos.

We have also found wigs, false teeth, and even a toilet seat tucked in with boxes and bags of papers. Obviously, in buildings that have not been occupied, there is also the risk of animals and animal waste. This archivist/archaeologist has never had the unfortunate experience of finding living mice, but I have often encountered evidence they were there before me. And, of course, there is ample evidence of a variety of bugs—both remains and, on occasion, living!

The most unusual acquisition story in which the Archives has been involved revolves around a gun. A Western Michigan University administrator had donated family and professional papers to the Archives in the years following his retirement. On occasion, he stopped into the Archives and dropped off materials, and, other times, somebody would go and retrieve papers from him. On a nice spring day in the early 1990s, he called the Archives to ask if somebody could pick up a few more papers he wanted to deposit. I had never met him and enthusiastically agreed to stop by his condominium over lunch. We visited briefly and I left with a brief case and a paper bag. The bag seemed heavy for the size and presumed number of papers in it, but I simply transported them back to the Archives where I handed the materials to Wayne Mann who was, at the time, the Director of the Archives. Mr. Mann returned about 20 minutes later and asked if I had looked at the papers or anything else in the bag. I indicated that the donor said that this material was especially for Wayne and I had not looked in the bag. Unbeknownst to me, the donor wanted to show a vintage firearm to Wayne and thought the most efficient way to deliver it would be to pack the gun in the bag with the papers! Let me hasten to affirm, the gun was NOT added to the Archives and Regional History Collections.

The next time you visit the Archives and Regional History Collections, in addition to realizing that you are working with unique and interesting materials, you may want to ask about the acquisition itself. Where did it come from and how did it get to the Archives. You may be surprised by the answer, but if you’ve read this far, you may also have learned that every archival collection has a story behind the acquisition that is also a part of the mystery of history!

Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.

—Joseph Addison

Friends of the University Libraries: 2007

Susan Steuer, recently appointed Head of Special Collections, headlined the Winter Program of the Friends organization on January 19, 2007. Dr. Steuer’s article on the unique international exhibit of Nobel prize winners, which was displayed in Waldo during the fall of 2006, is found elsewhere in this issue of Gatherings. However, a significant part of her responsibilities in Special Collections relates to medieval history and manuscript administration, areas that are near and dear to her heart since her doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota were directed first to history and then to medieval studies. As she notes in her vitae, her research interests lie in “interdisciplinary social history with particular focus on quantitative and literary approaches to women, religion and social structure.”

The presentation by Susan Steuer to the Friends was entitled “From Widows to Waldo” and spoke about her education and background as preparation for working with WMU’s Special Collections materials, including information about her areas of academic research, notably widows who took religious vows in late medieval England and devotional literature. As she spoke, it was obvious that, as she first noted in her letter of application, “Working at Western Michigan’s Rare Book and Special Collections Library would be a natural outgrowth of my educational and academic interests.”

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Waldo Hosts Nobel Winners!

By Susan Steuer, Head, Special Collections

The University Libraries was fortunate to host, in late 2006, an exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bertha von Suttner in 1905, and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 1945. The exhibition was on display from October 18 through December 17, 2006, on the first floor of Waldo Library. The substance of the exhibit, which was designed as a tool for researchers and the general public, can be viewed on a website, http://www.indiana.edu/~nobel/index.html, with digitized original documents from the League of Nations Photo Archive and the United Nations Library in Geneva. The Waldo exhibit opened on October 18, 2006 in the Meader Rare Book Room at 3:30 p.m. with presentations from Mr. Jian Liu, Dr. Robert Goehlert and Dr. Kenneth Steuer, who described the conception, rationale and ongoing development of the project. The exhibition was accompanied by bookmarks with website information and printed bibliographies about the Nobel Peace Prize for those interested in delving further into the topic.

The exhibition highlights thirty-nine laureates—people and institutions—who have a strong link with the pre-World War I peace movement, the League of Nations, and the United Nations. The exhibit is arranged on forty-five freestanding panels, each six feet tall. Each panel cele rates a laureate and includes a photo, quotation, and short biographical sketch. Among the laureates featured are von Suttner, who, in 1905, became the first woman to receive the prize; U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who led the United States delegation to the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference; Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, who won the peace prize in 1922 for his humanitarian work with refugees; and current U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who became the Permanent Court of International Justice, the Bureau International du Travail, and Miscellaneous Photos. The originals of the photos are held with the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) Library, League of Nations Archives Sub-Unit. The photo archive website, maintained through Indiana University, also includes reference tools to help users contextualize the materials, including a bibliography of English-language works about the League, a timeline of events during the interwar period, a research guide to other primary sources about League activities and members, and links to other relevant sites.

The resulting website exceeded the expectations of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and the Geneva archivists were eager to participate in another project with the librarians at Indiana. Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert, Chief of the League of Nations Archives at that time, approached Goehlert, Steuer, and Liu with the idea of commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Peace Prize. As a result, plans were made for another team to go to Geneva. This team included two librarians, a designer, three library school students, and a historian, Ken Steuer, who selected the materials for the exhibit and accompanying website, and provided the metadata for the project. The design and content development for the panels were completed at Indiana University during Fall 2005, after which the material was submitted to the relevant UN agencies for final approval. The final panel production took an additional six weeks. The exhibition was displayed at Wells Library at Indiana University and the Indiana State Library prior to being installed at Western Michigan University in late 2006. A duplicate set of panels was prepared in Geneva and displayed at the United Nations Library there, also in 2006. The next significant public viewing will be an unveiling of the exhibition in 2007 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

Global exhibitions, such as the Nobel Peace Prize winners, offer the University Libraries the opportunity to enrich the educational experience of students by exposing them to material outside the classroom that enhances their education and complements their studies, regardless of specialization. The exhibits also represent the new technologies and techniques that libraries are using to promote and interpret their collections across disciplines and institutions. The creation of websites that digitize the holdings of international organizations makes unique materials accessible to researchers and students from around the world. Such projects also promote the development of new institutional links between universities and international agencies in innovative ways. During their visit to open the exhibition, Goehlert, Steuer, and Liu met with WMU’s own Digitization Center.

Nobel Laureates at Waldo.

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Celebrating Handmade Books, Paper, and Printing: An Exhibition

January 22 — March 16, 2007
Waldo Library
Atrium Entrance and Third Floor

Papers to be presented in conjunction with the exhibition are "Papermaking—Ancient Craft: New Art" by Eve Reid and "How I Made a Medieval Manuscript" by Pamela Rups.

For further information about times and places, call (269) 387-5221.

Gatherings

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Nobel Winners

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staff. They discussed the development and funding of digital projects and best practices in working with research and teaching faculty to develop strong projects. In collaboration with scholars at Western Michigan University, the faculty and staff of the Libraries hope to create new educational and research tools from our own collections to increase awareness and access to the unique items held here, explain their significance, and provide information and inspiration to the public as well as students and academic researchers.

[Special thanks to Robert Goehlert and Kenneth Steuer for additional material.]

[Susan M.B. Steuer began her service as head of the Special Collections unit in the University Libraries in August, 2006. She holds a B.A., from the University of Missouri-Columbia, a M.L.S. from Indiana University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Sue brings to her faculty position significant experience and research in medieval studies, history, English, and journalism. She can be found in the Rare Book Room area on the third floor of Waldo Library, 387-5221.]

Western Michigan University

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