The Gift of Time—Pamela Jobin
By Sharon Carlson, Director, Archives and Regional History Collections

What do you call a person who has consistently dedicated many hours almost every week of the year to special projects for the University Libraries? What do you call a person who works simply for the satisfaction of a job well done and whose only payback is the promotion of resources found in the Archives and Regional History Collections? Regional History Collections director, Pamela Jobin, whose volunteer status has consistently dedicated many hours almost every week of the year to special projects for the Archives.

Over time, Mrs. Jobin became more and more involved in the processing and cataloging of collections. Her library science course work was beneficial as she took a leading role in launching the Archives’ first bibliographic database, MicroMARC, which is a “microcomputer collections management system for use by libraries, archives, special collections, museums etc”. In fact, she left her volunteer status between 1987 and 1989 and became a contractual employee, working with William K. Smith, a former faculty mentor from the library school, to input Marc records. This catalog would serve as the basis for the RH History catalog and the current project to migrate these records to WestCat and WorldCat.

At several points during her volunteer career, Mrs. Jobin worked at area bookstores, including Tom Sawyer’s Book Raft in Portage and Deadly Passions in downtown Kalamazoo. Time and again, she left these paid positions to spend more time on special projects at the Archives. She also had two other stints of part-time employment at the Archives. As part of her volunteer efforts, Mrs. Jobin was one of the four editors writing text for the revised edition of the Guide to the Western Michigan University Regional History Collections published in 1998. She also worked part-time from mid-2006 to early 2008 when Suzanne Husband, then curator of the Regional History Collections, was on leave. Most recently, Pamela, given her long involvement with institutional history, helped orient Jennifer Wood when she became the RHC curator in January 2008.

Most of Mrs. Jobin’s volunteer work these days involves the migration of the Archives’ catalog records into WestCat, the Libraries’ online catalog. In this capacity, she also works with staff of the Libraries’ Technical Services (cataloging acquisitions, binding, processing, etc.) Department. Her thirty years of experience make her an excellent resource for many different types of questions. Moreover, she also handles some genealogical inquiries, especially those involving French Canadian research, her area of expertise.

In addition to her volunteer work at the Archives, which averages about 20 hours a week, Mrs. Jobin completed her Certification in Canadian Records from the National Institute for Genealogical Studies, Toronto, last fall. Away from the Archives, she enjoys reading and crocheting. She recently celebrated a landmark wedding anniversary (40 years) with her husband Brian, who retired from Pfizer in 2006. Pamela is actively involved in the lives of her grandchildren, Justin, Malachi, Ryan, and Isaac, who live in Vicksburg and Grand Rapids.

As one looks back over the previous paragraphs, the word “volunteer” does not begin to describe Pamela Jobin’s contributions to the collections and services of WMU’s archival and regional history collections. In fact, these brief comments cannot express the gratitude of the staff for her continuing relationship with the Archives. Her input is sought out and highly valued on projects such as the catalog migration from RH History to WestCat. “Ask Pam” is frequently heard around the Archives, and she usually has the answer to almost any question because of her three decades of work with the records and materials. The University Libraries is truly the beneficiary of a priceless gift of time and expertise.