**"The Making of Modern Michigan"**

By Bettina Meyer, Assistant Dean for Resources

Western Michigan University Libraries has become a Regional Digitization Center for “The Making of Modern Michigan” digitization project funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. IMLS, located in Washington, DC, is “a federal grant-making agency that promotes leadership, innovation, and a lifetime of learning by supporting the nation’s museums and libraries” (http://www.imls.gov). Created by the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996, the Institute is a major force behind contemporary initiatives for all museums and libraries in the U.S.

“The Making of Modern Michigan” project was proposed by the Digitization Committee of the Action Team for Library Advancement Statewide (ATLAS) with the goal of empowering a wide range of libraries, smaller libraries in particular, to contribute to a digital collection focusing on Michigan history. The theme of the project fits into the K-12 Michigan Curriculum Framework and makes available unique collections of historical materials housed in smaller communities in Michigan. These unique collections will be available to scholars and lifelong learners as well.

The ATLAS Committee is chaired by Michael Seadle, Michigan State University, and has a larger charge to determine the level of digitization in the State of Michigan and then to propose projects and gain funding for digitization. A key result of their planning is “the making of Michigan” effort which is the first step to “creating the infrastructure necessary to ensure an integrated digital environment within Michigan” (http://www.michiganelibrary.org/about/atlas/digitize.htm). Among the members are Margaret E. Auer, University of Detroit Mercy; Jo Budler, Library of Michigan; Ruth Dukelow, Michigan Library Consortium; Sheryl Cormicle Knox, Clarus Information Architects; Bettina Meyer, WMU; Nancy R. Robertson, Library of Michigan; Kathleen M. Swanger, Macomb Intermediate School District; and Jeffrey G. Trzeciak, Wayne State University.

At Western Michigan University, there will be several internal digitization efforts. One of the first comes from the Archives and Regional History Collections: this library will be contributing images from photographer Ward Morgan. The Ward Morgan Collection includes 26,436 photographic negatives taken by Morgan, a Kalamazoo, Michigan, photographer, between 1939 and 1987. Images include architectural exteriors and interiors of Kalamazoo area business and industries, street scenes, exterior views of residences, portraits of local community leaders, and advertising.

The images are arranged both in chronological order and by subject, (e.g., Advertising, Business Products, Daily Life, Events, People at Work, etc.). Some major industries have been maintained separately. Within these categories, 156 images have been selected for presentation. Scans were made at a 303 pixels/inch resolution and saved in the tif format. Positive images were created for presentation. The next steps involve creating metadata for the collection and making decisions about the user interface. As an online collection, it will provide resources for several classes at Western Michigan University and serve patrons seeking regional images. On a larger scale, it will make a valuable contribution to visual resources for Web researchers.

Because of “The Making of Modern Michigan” project, and additional support from the Office of the Provost, a digitization center is under construction on the lower level of Waldo. Lou Ann Morgan has been employed part time to manage the digitizing lab and supervise the student workers who will be digitizing the documents and images. She will also assist and train people from regional libraries who are working on “The Making of Modern Michigan” projects.

The department of Special Collections is another unit in the Libraries that is already involved in the digital initiatives. Special Collections will be making high quality digital copies of rare books useful for research. Over the last few years, Special Collections has acquired a number of books in which the first printing of Old English appears, often using special fonts of type cast particularly for the printings. A testbed project involving a book printed in 1567, which will be accompanied by an introduction to the text written by a professor of Old English from another university, will be underway in late 2003. This effort will initiate a long-term collaborative project contribu-
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tuition and other responsible actions that would be taken to balance the budget. Unfortunately, this action compounds a four-year history of net losses to the acquisitions budget that pays not only for print and non-print purchases, but also for licensed access to electronic databases. Next year, the projected 3% increment to the acquisitions budget will obviously not cope with the inflation-based 11% required to maintain even the status quo. When the same resources cost 11% more and the Libraries receives 3%, then book purchases must be cut back in some areas, subscriptions must be cancelled, and electronic resources must be curtailed. And, this reality is further accelerated by the fact that the Board of Trustees approved a University budget in July that also includes a base-budget cut to library personnel and operational expenses of some 3.75%.

"Damnit!" The process of downsizing has been, needless to say, far less pleasurable than our fine dreams of the future. Inevitably, we must step back from a position that, in and of itself, was to be enhanced and expanded. To meet the anticipated cut to the base budget, some public service fiscal-year faculty have gone to academic year appointments, thereby reducing the quality and degree of public services offered during certain time periods such as the summer sessions. Student work hours have been reduced, and, as a result, some work will be delayed significantly or simply not done. Maintenance and upgrades to essential technologies have been delayed. Faculty development and travel funds have been eliminated. We anticipate gaps in service to departments; less flexibility in scheduling instructional sessions; shorter open hours of Waldo and all branches; closure of public services during breaks; delays in reshelving books, journals, and other materials; and an overall loss in service both in person and online. These are not only possible, but known outcomes of the first cutbacks in 2003.

The reductions have necessarily focused our attention on daily operations, infrastructure, workflow, and patron relations. We have been reexamining what we have done and had to do, but now must postpone or modify or reposition. The veterans on the University Libraries’ faculty and staff remind us that, on other occasions, state budgets have been inadequate, and notable holes (missing titles or years) have developed in our collections, especially in journal collections. Moreover, the entire University community is undergoing budget reverses and cutbacks. Indeed, because the University Libraries is an academic service, we have not suffered the greater losses of our non-academic, non-instructional colleagues.

What will be? The mission and goals of Western Michigan and the University Libraries will guide us through these times as we continue to serve the academic enterprise. Despite the immediate consequences and ongoing implications of the present economic climate, the morale of our faculty and staff is high. More than ever, we have been functioning as a team. The many members who comprise the advisory group for collections will use acquisitions dollars wisely. Their decisions will reflect the specific needs of advanced study and research, but will never bypass our teaching mission. We will move soberly ahead in purchasing technologies and resources that will enhance instruction and research. Still on our priority list are the image management system and the establishment of our digitization center that is described elsewhere in this issue. We have been able to fund replacement of terminals in the Libraries bringing the latest technology to one of our classrooms as well as all public terminals. In the short term, we will draw upon endowment monies to provide travel and development support to faculty in the tenure track and faculty desirous of promotion. We will support research and continuing education for all of our faculty and staff, whenever possible, for a knowledgeable and strong faculty and staff are a conduit to excellence in service for all of WMU’s students, faculty, and staff. I might also add that our Friends of the University Libraries organization, which is now helping to publish Gatherings, has established a development fund for staff members to improve and add skill sets.

Mobilizing ourselves under the banner of our mission, we will identify metrics that will offer us a truer picture of where our University Libraries fits among the members of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the reputable Association of Research Libraries. Comparisons to peer institutions will assist in assessing the relative size of the library staff, volumes held, number of current serials, and dollars spent on monographs and serials. Such documentation will guide our planning and underpin requests to the central administration for future funding. Commercial evaluation instruments assessing library services and patron satisfaction will be employed to give us an indication of our effectiveness in rendering essential support to the student and faculty users in areas of service, collections and technology. We, must, to paraphrase William Faulkner, "not only endure, but prevail."

In good times and in bad, every great university should have an equally great library. No "damnit" needed!

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Gatherings

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