Resources “On the Road”:
Part 2
By Judy Garrison and Julie Hayward

[Gatherings (Spring 1999, No. 21) contained an article “On the Road Again!” by Elaine Jayne and Mae O’Neal that described the library instructional program delivered by faculty members Jayne and O’Neal to the five regional centers that provide off-campus classes to Western Michigan University students. Equally important to the off-campus program is the actual delivery of library resources to the students. This service is administered by Waldo Library’s Resource Sharing Center]

The fax machine is ringing: chances are that more Continuing Education Document Delivery request forms are arriving since such is a very common occurrence in the Resource Sharing Center (RSC), located on the second floor of Waldo Library, during the beginning weeks of each semester. Students enrolled in off-campus classes, taught at any of the five regional centers, can access the full array of the University Libraries’ collections—without actually walking through the entrance and into Waldo Library or other branches of the University Libraries located in Kalamazoo. In a nutshell (or an envelope or jiffy bag), the RSC assures direct home delivery for books, journal articles, and ERIC documents that are available in any of the Western Michigan University Libraries’ collections. The efforts of the Resource Sharing Center put new meaning into the concept of circulating or moving collections since the items that they ship out are found across the state, and occasionally in nearby states, in the homes and offices of WMU’s off-campus students, both undergraduate and graduate.

The Continuing Education Document Delivery Service (CEDDS) began in September 1991. The obvious source of such a service was found in the Resource Sharing Center that handles all of the interlibrary loan requests to borrow books and other materials not owned by the Libraries for students, faculty, and staff. Although interlibrary loan activity in and of itself constitutes a full-time role for any RSC, the staff expertise in borrowing and lending materials made them the heir apparent to provide off-campus library loans.

During the first year of operation, the service received 264 requests for material. Seven years later, in 1997/1998, the demand had escalated in a truly exponential fashion: 4,915 requests were processed. When a service demand increases almost twenty-fold in that period of time, it is obvious that the need is there—and equally obvious that the University must make unique efforts to meet its commitments to off-campus students.

A request for a library resource is initiated either by directly contacting the RSC, or through one of the five centers. There is the Kendall Center, Battle Creek; the Grand Rapids Regional Center; the Lansing Regional Center; the Muskegon Regional Center; and the Southwest Regional Center. Two regional sites, one in Holland and one in Traverse City, also have access to document delivery. Depending on the point of time (and class pressure) in the academic semester or session, CEDDS may receive as few as 10 daily requests—or as many as 150. And, the RSC fills a majority of the requests within 24 hours of receipt although, during unusually active periods or if problems are encountered, the time may extend to 48 hours. This “speedy service” is due both to the commitment to get the material to the student as soon as possible and the fact that off-campus courses are completed in fewer weeks than the standard on-campus classes.

Once a request reaches the

Continued on page 2
Resources "On the Road"...
Continued from page 1

Resource Sharing Center, CEDDS contact person Julie Hayward and her student assistants go into action. Often, the first steps require her to be both a detective and a mind reader. Faxes may come through quickly, but problems occur that are not obvious at the point of origin. One of the most frustrating is the blank page—due to upside down insertion of the originals into the fax machine. Other common problems include what appear to be missing pages, i.e., the cover page number noted does not match the number of pages received; patrons include everything except their names and addresses so there is no known place to send the material; and, as one might expect, incomplete citations are sent, i.e., authors, titles of books and journals, dates, pages needed, etc., may be missing. Finally, and not a minor problem is the fact that handwritten requests may not be legible or readable especially on a fax. Each of these problems requires time and considerable creative effort to resolve.

Once the initial problems are resolved, the requests are searched in WestCat, the University Libraries’ Online Catalog, and call numbers identified. Requests for material not owned by the Libraries, incomplete/incorrect citations, and items that are in circulation (already checked out) or non-circulating (such as reference and rare books) are set aside for special processing. The remainder of the requests are divided by call number and library, i.e., Waldo, Education, Music and Dance, and then must be physically retrieved for further processing and shipment. Journal articles, or chapters in books, are photo-copied; entire books are checked out to the individual who requested the loan. During 1997/98, 220 books were shipped and 2,950 articles were copied. All books are sent UPS; articles are sent by the U.S. mail. Patrons are notified of requests that are unavailable along with a reason as to the item’s unavailability. If a patron has special needs, the staff members attempt to process the request to meet that need. Patrons may also contact the RSC if they would like to check on the status of their requests. Every request for off-campus service is entered into a log that permits the staff to trace what the current status is as well as the full history from point of receipt through processing and shipment.

Needless to say, this service has been invaluable to the off-campus students and staff. The success of this special effort to meet continuing educational needs is heavily dependent on the fine communication skills of the library personnel servicing the document delivery system. On many occasions, Julie Hayward works directly with the patron to solve problems, identify the right source, and provide a positive experience in the use of the University Libraries. As with the faculty who teach the use of resources off-campus, Waldo library staff who work “at a distance” make every effort to help students better understand the library and its resources. They are there to assure that the University Libraries CAN work for all who study in regional centers and sites.

The Venereal Game
By Laurel A. Grotzinger

The whole episode began innocently. E-mail among colleagues is not always “simply business.” Therefore, several minds were curious about the e-mail that was identified on the subject line as “Group of Librarians.” The message quickly explained it: “In an effort to create a useless, mind-stretching activity, I question the following: What do you call a group of Librarians?”

Who could resist? Before an hour was up, “watson@wmich.edu” was besieged with responses—some witty, some cute, some slightly insulting, some, indeed, thoughtful. As the offerings sprang forth on the computer screen, I was reminded of a superb book that was published many years ago. James Lipton had “gathered” together the imaginative figures of speech, often known as collective nouns, in a curious volume called An Exaltation of Larks or, The Venereal Game (Grossman Publishers, 1968).

One has to read a few pages into the Introduction to learn more about the term “the venereal game.” Basically, Lipton was enjoying himself identifying the appropriate phrase for groups of animals—and providing pieces of history. “The thesis of this book can be summed up very simply: when a group of ravens flaps by, you should, if you want to refer to their presence, say, ‘There goes an unkindness of ravens.’ Anything else would be wrong” (p. 8). He then goes on to list several synonyms: “nouns of multitude,” “nouns of assemblage,” “group terms,” and, yes, “terms of venery.” You really should read his explanation of this phrase, but, in short, he relates its etymological roots to hunting and the chase. The venereal game is on and, in the following pages, Lipton identifies terms of venery for a variety of birds and beasts of the field and city as well as the human kind. The end result is a charming, informative, and delightful volume that is artfully illustrated.

Lipton goes so far as to identify six “families”: onomatopoeia, e.g., a gaggle of geese; characteristic, e.g., a tidings of magpies; appearance, e.g., a hover of trout; habitat, e.g., a nest of rabbits; a good or bad comment, e.g., a shrewdness of apes; and, strangely enough, a simple error, e.g., a school of fish originated from the venereal phrase, a shool of fish. Lipton’s succeeding text is initially based on the original terms of venery that date from the fifteenth century. The author has gathered them together as “some new candidates for our contemporary lexicon.”

They are the trophies of what has been, for me,

Continued on page 4