Sharing and Cooperation in Western Michigan
by Lance Query

As the amount of available information proliferates in all formats, and as the cost of acquiring that information also increases, libraries must decide what to acquire for their own patrons because it is needed often or quickly, and what must be acquired from other libraries “in time” to meet the patron’s need. Librarians refer to this paradigm as “access versus ownership” of information. At the present time, the trend in allocating dollar resources is toward access over ownership.

The key to an agreeable solution to both users and library administrators is one that incorporates a shared bibliographic catalog in which libraries and their users can identify the source of the information they need, and a delivery system that obtains the information within a reasonable amount of time at a reasonable cost. For practical and obvious reasons, progress in this area has been the major player in developing a system that obtains the information they need, and a delivery system to everyone, whether a LLC member or not, include the ability to search the following online catalogs:

KELLY: the regional online catalog that incorporates the bibliographic catalogs of over 40 regional libraries

FINDER: the WMU University Libraries catalog

LOOKITUP: the Kalamazoo Valley Community College catalog

CRL: the Center for Research Libraries (Chicago) catalog

VIDEOCAT: WMU’s catalog of instructional video and film holdings

The basic benefits of LLC membership include participation in the building of the KELLY database. Members may attach their holdings symbol to bibliographic records already in the database. They have the opportunity to add their bibliographic records to the database using the services of the Southwest Library Cooperative, thereby avoiding the costs of original cataloging. LLC members also have access to the electronic interlibrary loan facility that permits each library to generate and receive requests from other member libraries. The system also facilitates online statistical reports about use of the services of the consortium; this can be a valuable tool for planning. In addition, members have access to locally mounted commercial databases—for example, ERIC, an educational database available through WMU—for which consortium arrangements have been provided.

Because of the University’s major role in this shared resource system, a number of special services flow from the University out to the other members. Two notable programs are special training in the use of electronic access and electronic mail and bulletin board services.

Other services are available from WMU at an additional cost to member libraries. They include accounts on the University’s VAX computer, which, in turn, provides a gateway to the Internet; MARC tapes of the library’s holdings, extracted from the KELLY catalog, which can serve as the foundation of a local online catalog; and onsite service calls by the University’s Telecommunications or Library Systems Office staff. Through subscription, members libraries can also obtain access to the general periodical database, Reader’s Guide Abstracts.

The Lakeside Library Consortium’s success has set the stage for the next step in the development of a “total” shared collections philosophy. Discussions are already occurring among several of the LLC members, including WMU, and vendors regarding shared access to bibliographic and full-text databases. While cooperative purchasing and leasing of electronic resources is still an uncharted wilderness for librarians, vendors, and users, the benefits to be derived are so important—that we must continue to bring to the task the same spirit of cooperation that resulted in the bibliographic data and document delivery system that now exists in southwestern Michigan.

Women
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The meeting minutes document the discussions and actions leading to the Association’s decision to construct a permanent library and meeting space. In 1878, the Association succeeded in its building campaign and the building, still located at 333 South Park Street in downtown Kalamazoo, stands as a functional monument to the efforts of the early members. Among the archival records is the original 1878 ink on linen architectural drawing used to construct the building, as well as a copy of the Act of the Michigan Legislature of 1879 authorizing the Association to own real estate.

This amazing compilation of and about women, libraries, and nineteenth century Kalamazoo is one of several underutilized resources found in the University Libraries. The Ladies’ Library Association Collection offers many possibilities for scholarly examination, research, and publication. If the focus is either gender studies or social history, the library association records contain a treasure-trove of primary resources. Researchers may use the materials in the Archives and Regional History Collections, located in WMU’s East Hall, Room 11, on the East Campus. For further information, please call (616) 387-8790.