A Dane for All Seasons

A Friends' Personality
by
Maria Perez-Stable

Some of his colleagues affectionately call him the “Great Dane.” The title describes Gordon Eriksen admirably. He towers over the crowd, is most solidly built, has a resounding voice, an infectious personality, and a definite presence wherever he goes. Born among the hearty Scandinavian souls of St. Paul, Minnesota, he and his family moved within a few years to Graham, Texas where he graduated from high school in 1939. Two years later, he began what would be a life-long association with institutions of higher education when he enrolled at the University of Oklahoma.

The times, however, caught him up and after completing two years of college, he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps and served through World War II until 1946. With the useful assistance of post-war funding for veterans, he then returned to academic study and earned the first two of several degrees, a B.A. in English and, in 1950, the B.F.A. in drama.

A few years of career exploration took him to the firm decision to become an educator. The first step included a teaching certificate in 1957, and into the classrooms of high schools across the country. As he notes, “I never had a class I did not like.” Even the challenge of 26 high school senior boys who had been labeled “Do Not Admits” proved his love for teaching—and his ability to instruct and influence those who sat in his classes. During the 1950s, he began a correspondence with students, now friends, that continues to this day.

Turning from high school to higher academia, Gordon took the time to complete a M.A. in English literature in 1967, and six years later, earned the Ph.D., also in English literature, from the University of Colorado in Boulder where his dissertation dissected the life of George Fitzmaurice, an Irish playwright from the turn of the century. No one is surprised to learn that Dr. Eriksen was an avid reader as a child, and that this avocation still dominates his life.

After teaching at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, for a number of years, Dr. Eriksen concluded that a slight refocusing of his career was desirable. He headed a hundred or so miles east to the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign where, in his 50s, he earned the Master of Science in library science. He then sought out a graduate school of library science where teaching and his enchantment with books blended into a perfect vocation. WMU’s School of Library and Information Science employed him as the reference and bibliographic specialist in 1976. When the School was closed, Gordon made a logical transfer into the Central Reference Department of the University Libraries where he was able to put library theory into practice, teach, and have access to an infinite array of literary works.

Separate from his decades of teaching and literary exploration, Dr. Eriksen has a breadth of other interests. One of his greatest passions is music. Everyone in the family learned to read music, and Gordon inherited a fine voice from his father. He first participated in the church choir, then his undergraduate university chorus, and eventually the Houston Chorale. In fact, he claims that the most important moments in his life have centered on music. Needless to say, his musical knowledge is impressive. Not only has he attended hundreds of concerts, but he has served on several boards including the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony and Bach Festival Society of Kalamazoo, and has provided special support to the Fontana Concert Society.

Gordon loves almost all classical or serious musical offerings, but if pressed, will admit that his particular favorite is opera. He can call forth dozens of recollections of famous singers including the thrill of hearing Maria Callas sing in her first two American seasons. His enthusiasm for the operatic format is documented by trips to Chicago to enjoy the Lyric Opera, or visits with friends in Santa Cruz, California, so that he could attend the San Francisco Opera. On most Saturday afternoons, he will not answer his phone as he listens to the Metropolitan on WMUK.

A second major love that has taken him outside the halls of academic is that of travel. That love is simply explained: “I come by it honestly—I’m a Viking!” The Eriksen wanderlust has led him to accomplish a rare feat—he has visited each and every COUNTY in the continental United States, and only four counties in Hawaii are left before his map of the U.S.A. is totally blocked out. Friends know that it is only a matter of time before the 62” figure, in an aloha shirt and matching lei,
Rare? Special? Why?

By Tom Amos

The wording of the question is usually a bit more precise: “Can you tell me just why that book is up here?” But, it does get asked frequently. Often, the book that has raised the question is one found in the Carol Ann Haenicke American Women’s Poetry Collection. This is especially true if the volume has been published within the last ten years or even the last 50 since the user’s preconceptions define rare book or special collections (the names applied to the rooms where I work) as something centuries old or of some unique format or value. Yet, there the book is found, on the third floor of Waldo Library, in the Rare Book Room or its Vault.

To answer any such question in more detail than my usual few words of explanation, it’s necessary to review how the poetry collection (or other “special” collections) came into being. On October 28, 1993, the Carol Ann Haenicke American Women’s Poetry Collection was dedicated in the Edwin and Mary Meader Rare Book Room in Waldo Library. Although there are many other book collections in this country, some of which specialize in various areas of women’s studies, this particular array of materials was, and remains, the first to focus solely on poetry by American women authors.

The Women’s Poetry Collection originated when a collaboration of WMU’s Department of English, the administration of the University and key individuals in the University Libraries came to a common conclusion. The University’s English Department has long emphasized creative writing including poetry. As a result, the Libraries has a strong foundation in the literature including, of course, poetry books, literary journals, reference, and associated research tools that support course work and study in the field. Professors of English Katherine Joslin and her husband Thomas Bailey provided the starting point to acquire the poetry collection because of their friendship with Joslin’s dissertation director, Harrison Hayford, Professor Emeritus of English at Northwestern University.

Hayford, a Melville scholar and book collector, has spent his life building collections of American literature for academic libraries. One that he had not yet “placed” was a large “accumulation” of works by American women poets, over 2,200 volumes, that Joslin and Bailey saw as a rare opportunity; it could serve as the basis for a research collection at WMU. Shirley Clay Scott, chair of the department, added her support to a proposal presented to President Diether Haenicke and then Dean Douglas Ferraro, College of Arts and Sciences. Moreover, the recently re-opened and remodeled Waldo Library included a rare book and special collection facility on the third floor of the library—a locale that, for the first time, could provide an appropriate home for a valuable set of books. Monies exchanged hands and the Carol Ann Haenicke American Women’s Poetry Collection was established in honor of Mrs. Haenicke, a professional librarian and strong patron of the arts.

Along with the initial holdings came a plan for continuing growth and development. Within three years, the original purchase had tripled in size to over 6,190 books of which some 4,200 are cataloged in the Libraries’ online catalog. Also found in this “special” resource are five linear feet of manuscripts; seven sound recordings; twenty broadsides; and a number of artifacts, such as photographs, commemorative stamps and other objects. The ability to increase, significantly, the number of items was largely possible because Harrison Hayford has continued to collect American women poets, and two additional “accumulations” were purchased directly from him.

At the present time, the Haenicke poetry collection consists of the broadest possible range of authors, styles, and quality of poetry by American women poets. The chronological range stretches from Anne Bradstreet and an eighteenth century edition of Phillips Wheatley through Helen Hunt Jackson and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the nineteenth century to Marianne Moore, May Sarton, Rita Dove, Diane Wakoski, and Maya Angelou of our time. There are, in addition, some notable “units” within the overall breadth of acquisitions. Among them are the Harrison Hayford Emily Dickinson Collection (mainly early printed editions of her poetry), and an important grouping of 75 nineteenth-century gift books and albums that are consequential venues for women poets of that age.

The volumes in the Poetry Collection include first and subsequent editions, appearances in journals and anthologies, broadsides, and fine printing limited editions. Many types of materials and poetic genres can be found. Strong groups of the prose writings of some authors (drama, novels, short stories, essays, and criticism) are also housed with the poetry, and provide a context for the careers of the American poets who also wrote in other genres.

The Carol Ann Haenicke Collection does not exist in a vacuum. Not only do materials found in Waldo’s General Stacks support it, but so do other Special Collections holdings. A number of the women wrote or write children’s books. There are some 1,000 volumes in the Historical Children’s Collection including works by Michigan’s Gwen Frostic, Gwendolyn Brooks, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and others who are found in the Haenicke resources. Some limited editions, and books printed on the hand press by the Perishable Press or the Seizin Press were acquired by the Libraries long before the Poetry Collection was

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Unexpected Treasures
By Randle Gedeon

Most readers of Gatherings have only a vague idea of the varied print, electronic, and non-print collections that can be found in the University Libraries. Some are unaware that besides Waldo Library, three branches, Education, Music and Dance, and Archives and Regional History, add to the general and selected collections located within Waldo. The Education Library, located on the third floor of Sangren Hall, is the support center for the education and counseling disciplines. Within its collection, there are several unique resources that serve the students, faculty, and staff interested in the study of education. However, these resources can also be of use or interest to a broader audience.

Curriculum Enrichment Collection
One such set of resources is the Curriculum Enrichment Collection. Users of the University Libraries may have discovered that Waldo Library has a Children’s Literature section on the second floor replete with “easy” books and Dewey Decimal classification numbers. In addition, the Curriculum Enrichment Collection in the Education library offers books selected for the pre-kindergarten to sixth grade audience. This useful set of materials includes picture books, beginning readers, biographies, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

As expected and required with children’s literature, the subjects covered are far ranging—the sciences, many aspects of society, history, the physically challenged, the homeless, gender roles. If you name a topic, there is an excellent chance that a book relates to it. Of particular concern in recent acquisitions is the area of multicultural literature. Mary Ann Haws-Johnson, of the Education Library staff, is the main selector of the resources. A taste of her favorite picture book authors includes Eric Carle, Judith Heide Gilliland, Angela Johnson, Steven Kellogg, Jerry Pinkney, Patricia Polacco, and Faith Ringgold. If you want to get a sense of contemporary fiction, look for Ellen Howard, Jean Little, Walter Dean Myers, Gary Soto, Yoshiko Uchida, Jacqueline Woodson, and Laurence Yep. Not surprisingly, adults find the collection as diverse and intriguing as the youthful readers who frequent public and school libraries.

ERIC
A second, far different set of resources is found in the over 400,000 documents that constitute the ERIC microfiche collection. ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) came into being during the mid-1960s when clearinghouses for educational specializations were established across the U.S. The documents are collected at the national center, reproduced on microfiche, and today are indexed in both print and online catalogs. Information users who search the indexes can find technical reports from state and federally funded projects, institutional research surveys and statistical reports, papers presented at conferences and symposia, unpublished manuscripts (including theses and dissertations), teaching and curriculum guides, and tests and evaluation instruments. Almost anything that fell under the education umbrella, and was submitted to the Center has been included. (Indexed, but separate from the microfiche documents found in ERIC are journal articles that can be retrieved from the University Libraries or through interlibrary loan.)

ERIC identifies nine special audiences besides those of student and teacher who will be attracted to this growing database. Among them are researchers, practitioners, administrators, policymakers, counselors, media staff, educational support staff, and parents. The user often needs to review the abstract of the document in order to determine if it is relevant to his or her information query. Although searches of the online index (ERIC found in DataQuest I, WESTNET) will find the most recent articles listed first, users need to remember that this is a retrospective index and that some of the material is of historical interest only. Resources in Education (RIE) is the print index; each volume covers a given time span. In order for patrons to be able to read the microfiche, the Education Library has acquired three microfiche reader-printers and one microfilm/microfiche reader-printer. Users must have a local “copy” card to print out a paper copy but each machine has that capability.

Tremendous diversity in the coverage and content of ERIC brings a wealth of information to users. A small sampling revealed articles on women builders, email versus U.S. mail, the potential of the electronic library, literacy and empowerment, education behind bars, and the trials and tribulations of relationships.

Multimedia Collection
Many of the marvels associated with the world of personal computing are attached to the star called “multimedia.” In its most basic form, this modern technology utilizes sound, animation, and video clips to catch the viewer’s interest, and aims to breathe “life” into the experience. Multimedia applications are in use everywhere—at home, in school, and in the workplace. As a result, the Education Library has developed a growing collection of CD-ROM based multimedia titles. These products are ideal for curriculum support, personal enjoyment, or simply to increase enthusiasm for personal computing. A number of titles is noted below to give an idea of the breadth of the resources available. They can be obtained from the reserve section of the Education Library Circulation desk. All are “played” in the library on a special multimedia station.

For the younger audience, there is Aesop’s well-known fable, The Tortoise and the Hare, and Mercer Mayer’s Just Grandma and Me. These are described as “living books”: they bring animation to the popular stories. Also of interest is Math Blaster: In Search of Spot, a CD-ROM that teaches math skills. Presidential history buffs will enjoy, The Presidents: The Picture History of Our Nation. Produced by National Geographic, the multimedia format includes photographs, recordings of speeches, video clips, and a wealth of information from elections to biographical data. Each U.S. President is brought to life, from Washington to Bush. Two recent acquisitions reflect contemporary interest in Native American culture. North American Indians is an historical database and photo archive encompassing the lives and times of the indigenous North Americans. The content covers leaders, tribal heritage, religion, family life, customs, art, and war and weaponry. A second CD-ROM, The Indian Question, contains approximately 10,000 pages of...
steps onto the soil of the 50th state. Gordon thinks he retired from WMU in 1990, but that really isn't true. Back in the busy months when Waldo Library was being rebuilt and expanded, Assistant Dean Bettina Meyer and Gordon, along with some colleagues, began the planning for the first Friends of the University Libraries organization at WMU. Staff member Bill Smith and Gordon drafted a constitution, called together interested individuals, and, ergo, the Friends became a reality. No officer has probably contributed as much time and effort to the Friends as has Gordon—especially when the semi-annual book sales are at hand. Not only does he assist in collecting, marking, moving, and displaying the items, but he's invariably at the scene—a salesman par excellence.

One might expect that Gordon would have little time for anything else given the interests just noted, but currently he is involved in organizing the library at the Hospice of Greater Kalamazoo. Over the years, boxes of materials had been collected and ignored at the Hospice headquarters. Every item is being reviewed and cataloged so that the staff and patrons can find and use the information. Most recently, he began mentoring third grade children at the North Glade Elementary School. These mentees are at-risk students who need academic and social guidance. This means that he also attends school events so that he can support and encourage his young charges.

What next? The wandering, musical, literary Dane really doesn’t know. We can hardly wait for the next season to arrive!

Gatherings

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What is more important in a library than anything else—than everything else—is the fact that it exists.

—Archibald Macleish

A Dane for All Seasons

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To Share, or Not to Share
By Lance Query

Michigan is behind the times and the needs of its citizens. One close-to-home example is sharing of library resources. In the fast-evolving age of information, Michigan's information superhighway is as inadequate—and as full of potholes—as its expressways and state highway system. The promise and possibilities of information superhighway are unparalleled; the reality is that many of our citizens are information poor.

My first concern is for the academic environment of the state since that is my domain. While it is true that the state has developed a strong set of regional networks, consortia, and cooperative ventures, the infrastructure that would promote easier and better access to electronic information resources found in the State's colleges and universities is simply not there. There is a theoretical commitment to "share," but an accepted and workable plan, to which all academic institutions would be committed, does not exist. In particular, programs that would allow institutions to maximize their acquisitions dollars do not exist.

In a number of other states, the academic library community has led the way to multi-type library cooperation and advocated involvement of public, school, and other libraries in the structure. One such state is Ohio where OhioLINK (http://www.ohiolink.edu) has provided a single automation system that connects all campuses, patron-initiated borrowing, regional off-site storage facilities, and reference databases. That success has come about because of generous funding by the legislature and the establishment of an "office" within the Ohio Board of Regents. A full-time staff of 10-plus individuals is an indication of the basic requirements that a state-wide system demands—as well as solid support provided at the state level.

Lest one suppose that only the "richer" states are leaders in this effort, one can turn to Georgia where the appropriately named GALILEO system (http://galileo.galib.uga.edu) is the force that has brought about across-the-board access and sharing. In this example, a different model has achieved that common goal. In contrast to Ohio, the Georgia system has used the respective local systems and made them accessible to all via a Web-based Z39.50 client. One of GALILEO's strengths is its easy access to many online and Internet databases. The common goal that both Ohio and Georgia attain is no-cost resource sharing among participating libraries. And, GALILEO functions with only four staff members at the coordinating center.

Another "working model" is found in Virginia where academic libraries have recently formed VIVA (http://www.viva.lib.va.us/), the "virtual library of Virginia." VIVA is a consortium of the libraries of the 39 state-assisted colleges and universities. One of its components is regional electronic resource centers that cooperatively purchase, develop, and store a wide variety of databases, and provide training and access. The state legislature has funded VIVA with nearly $5 million for the 1996-98 biennium. Besides these three state models, Pennsylvania has PALCI (http://www.lehigh.edu/~arh5/paici.htm); SLED is connecting Alaska from shore line to mountain top (http://sled.alaska.edu); and Indiana has an initial $1 million authorized for the purchase of online and Internet accessible databases.

Why is Michigan not listed in this cutting edge group committed to sharing resources? The answer is complex and lies in a variety of variables. One major obstacle is the fact that academic libraries in Michigan are autonomous, unlike those in Ohio where a strong state board controls the educational postsecondary enterprise. Without a central authoritative structure, the "intentions" often expressed by Michigan institutions have not been catalyzed. The directors of public academic libraries (COLD: Coalition of Library Directors), and the directors of private academic libraries (AICUM: Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan) meet regularly and have supported shared access to electronic resources and other cooperative efforts. The first real step toward a state-wide plan is a pilot project between 60 academic libraries and OCLC's FirstSearch databases and online journals. This project, facilitated via the Michigan Library Consortium, is seen as an incentive for other forms of cooperation. But, the lack of a central authority makes any agreement to act far more difficult. Moreover, the two organizations, COLD and AICUM, lack continuity in membership. The largest institutions, Wayne State, Michigan State, and Michigan, have all changed their library leadership in a three-year period.

Still another Michigan factor rests in the realm of institutional image and association. Although COLD is composed of all the directors of the publicly funded institutions, Michigan's two largest academic libraries are primarily interested in working with the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), which is comprised of the Big Ten schools and the University of Chicago. That world class set of schools has developed its own network, CICNet. In effect, Michigan and Michigan State University have chosen to work primarily with their peers in other states in sharing resources. This has had obvious implications for the other twelve public academic libraries located in Michigan.

Do these factors dictate a no response to the "share or not to share" question? Of course not. For the first time in several years, two strong leaders have emerged at the state level: George Needham at the State Library of Michigan and Randy Dykhuis at the Michigan Library Consortium, which is composed of nearly 600 libraries of all kinds and sizes. Both have initiated discussions with the directors of

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academic libraries, who, in turn, are essential for state-wide cooperation. The changed library leadership at the three largest academic institutions has brought people to this state from states that have already developed cooperative sharing. And I, of course, am equally committed to the concept and its implementation.

One special initiative has already begun. Seven academic libraries, public (including WMU) and private, plus the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Michigan and the Michigan Library Consortium have joined to explore avenues of cooperation. In January of this year, the ACCESSMichigan Project came into being. That project has a multi-step, multi-year structure that will create a digital library system. All citizens of Michigan will have access to the information they need, when they need it, and where they need it. The first phase will provide access to electronic indexes; ASCII full-text, article images; library online catalogs; and electronic journals. The second aspect will include flat-rate access to OCLC’s interlibrary lending for all participating Michigan libraries. Part of the implementation includes assisting the libraries to digitize the materials in their collections so that the information can be electronically transferred. Phase three will provide flat-rate access to OCLC cataloging for all participating libraries. Implicit in these goals is the intention to involve all libraries, public and school, as soon as possible. While the beginning rests with the academic libraries as the major players, the end must be state wide, library wide, resource wide, citizen wide.

To share—or not to share? There is no question. ACCESSMichigan can and will lead the way, and I am proud of the role WMU has played in this important effort. Western Michigan University is fully committed to providing our share of leadership and resources to ensure that the project shall succeed.

“The light that radiates from the great novels time can never dim, for human existence is perpetually being forgotten by man and thus the novelists’ discoveries, however old they may be, will never cease to astonish.”

—Milan Kundera