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

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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 photocopied; 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 shoal 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,
“Physician, Heal Thyself”

By Lance Query

[Readers of Gatherings are familiar with Lance Query’s analysis of information and library issues affecting the University Libraries. However, coming to the Michigan over five years ago, Dean Query has taken a leadership role in state-wide library access issues serving as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Library Consortium, as a charter member of the Steering Committee of AccessMichigan, and on the Public Policy Committee of the Michigan Library Association. Each of these active roles has deepened his concern about the future of citizen access to the expanding world of electronic resources. This column addresses the future of such access.]

During the past two years, Michigan libraries have come a long way toward realizing the benefits of cooperation. The primary vehicle for this cooperation has been AccessMichigan (AM). AM is a statewide, collaborative project of Michigan libraries of all types—from school media centers to public libraries to hospital/medical libraries to academic research libraries. The ultimate goal of AccessMichigan is to create a digital information environment that will offer every resident of the State equitable and easy-to-use access to a core set of information sources. For the first time, as it is implemented across the State, the AM project bridges the gaps among different types of libraries, collections, and users. In addition, several independent, but similar, information access efforts already developed or under development are being drawn together to provide a Michigan-wide library of information. The objectives of AccessMichigan include the provision of a rich assortment of online databases, a common user interface, and training for Michigan librarians and the general public in effective use of the almost unlimited number of electronic resources now available.

Despite the establishment of a solid base and a growing momentum among the State’s libraries in support of Michigan’s shared database acquisitions project, there are clouds on the horizon, an impending sickness of the body. Foremost among concerns is the fact that funding is precarious since there are no base monies. Until now, the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) has been the source of financial support along with the Library of Michigan. One or both of these funding sources could easily dry up due to Congressional [in]action or other priorities. As a result, there is a major need to develop a stable funding base that will ensure continuation of the foundation already firmly in place. As one who has been involved in the leadership and planning for AccessMichigan since it was initiated, I have developed a proposal that could address the issue of future funding—and cooperation. Currently under discussion by the Michigan Library Consortium’s Executive Board and the AccessMichigan’s Steering Committee as well as the library deans and directors of Michigan’s fifteen public universities, and other public, school, and special library directors, the proposal builds on the fact that Michigan is composed of a decentralized library community, i.e., no legal, political, or social regulations tie the multiple entities together. Given that fact, a decentralized solution to funding seems not only obvious, but, more important, something that could be done without state-wide legislative, educational, institutional compacts. The proposal depends on each Michigan library, operating on its own, to make a commitment.

Proposal: Each Michigan not-for-profit library, regardless of type or size, will contribute one percent of its acquisitions budget to a state-wide pool that would then be used to acquire electronic resources that would be accessible to all users of those same libraries.

The purpose of such a funding proposal would be four-fold: (1) To increase the amount of funds available collectively, and thereby leverage our acquisition dollars so that the best (and, ipso facto, most expensive) resources would be available state-wide; (2) To supplement current funding from federal and State sources, and to ensure that funding is there, regardless; (3) To create a means by which the momentum to develop a shared, statewide “library” offering quality resources involves every individual library; and (4) To drive Michigan’s libraries to devise a state-wide “plan” for the development of all Michigan libraries.

Having set such a basic standard by which the Michigan library community could “heal itself” and offer accessible information to all citizens, the next set of questions quickly emerges. Some of the questions have no ready answers, but they need to be noted.

1) How about the libraries that will not agree to the one percent donation? Answer: Let us begin on a voluntary basis. As resources are made available, peer pressure, maybe even legislative pressure, and patron demand will undoubtedly show the wisdom of the effort.

2) Why should the large institutions—both academic and public—disproportionately bear the cost? A: One per cent is one per cent, and although the dollars add up faster when based on a multi-million dollar budget, the effect on acquisitions is the same, and the end result is value across the board—even the largest institutions benefit from leveraged dollars.

3) Who would be the “manager” of the pool of resources. A: AccessMichigan is already up and running; this proposal is a means by which to motivate each

Lance Query

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participant as well as to provide stable funding.
4) Will such a pooling of resources let Congress, the governor, and the state legislature ignore a key problem that they should handle? A: Perhaps, but it might also motivate federal and State funding since an institutional investment/commitment from each library is involved.
5) Doesn't this plan put the cart before the horse? Should there not be a statewide plan for libraries before dollars are earmarked to purchase resources? A: Sure, plans are key, but Michigan shores are littered with plans that fell for want of funding.

When push comes to shove, and the problem must be solved, then a seemingly simple answer often turns out to be the best way to proceed. The extraordinary need to make the magnificent world of electronic resources available to all users, regardless of their location, the size of their library, and their personal computer ownership is so compelling that we could move forward quickly and effectively. The "plan" will be crafted, refined, and implemented because the right environment will exist in Michigan. This proposal provides a solution to a problem, a healing, because it adds an individual library commitment to an idea already well-founded: AccessMichigan works. AccessMichigan can work even better. The more funds we have, the more vendors are willing to work with us, and provide the right resources in the right formats that we need. Moreover, the greatest strength of the proposal is its simplicity. Initial implementation, that is, commitment by the majority of the larger academic, institutional, and public libraries of one percent, could be done within a few months. And, if the cure doesn't work, little has been lost; the "pact" to donate one percent can be dissolved among those who contributed. AccessMichigan will survive, and the physician, the state of our libraries, will seek another way to "heal." Until we try, however, we can never know if the answer is right before our eyes. "Physician," indeed, "heal thyself."

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"Interconnected globally, they [computers] will form a network, which is being called the information highway."
—William H. Gates III

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a long and exciting search that began when I realized with a sudden exhilarating shiver that GAGGLE OF GEESE and PRIDE OF LIONS might not be just isolated pools of amusing poetic idiosyncracy but estuaries leading to a virtually uncharted sea, sparkling with found poetry—and intriguing poetic possibilities. ... It isn't just that we will be able to turn to someone and cooly and correctly say, "Look—a charm of finches." What is more important is that a charm of poetry will have quietly slipped into our lives (p. 19).

As you turn the pages of the book, and examine its illustrations, you will discover, if not already obvious from the first examples, that some of the terms of venery are well-known, for example, "A Host of Angels," "A Swarm of Bees," "A Litter of Pups." But Lipton's compilation of collective nouns includes many more that are completely new and unexpected, and you begin to wonder why some of them had never occurred to you.

At one point, Lipton notes, "These terms are authentic and authoritative. They were used, they were correct, and they are useful, correct—and available—today" (p.30). To try and select a few, from the many, is difficult, but, among those that caught my fancy in Lipton's first set of examples are:

"A Murder of Crows"
"A Skulk of Foxes"
"A Parliament of Owls"
"An Ostentation of Peacocks"

In a section called "The Unexpected" are found:

"A Converting of Preachers"
"An Obeisance of Servants"
"A Skulk of Thieves"

"A Melody of Harpists"

Finally, Lipton concludes with some contemporary "collectives" that he thought to be "shards of poetry and truth." Among them:

"A Sample of Salesmen"
"A Nerve of Neighbors"

"An Aroma of Bakers" and, horrors,
"A Shush of Librarians."

And, so, we are back, full circle to the question. And, let it be known, only one person referred to a group of librarians in a similar manner—and then only historically—since, in today's electronic environment, libraries are seldom quiet or "shushful." In fact, one respondent even suggested that "A Cacophony of Librarians" was not unlikely! Several of the suggestions were of the kind that only someone who knew library history and language might understand as, for example,

"A Dewey of Librarians"
"A Quire of Librarians"
"A Classification of Librarians"
"A Tracing of Librarians"
"A Stack (or Shelf) of Librarians"
"An Archive of Librarians"

Others, however, seemed to have a sense of the purpose of a term of venery—or a librarian. But let the respondents speak for themselves:

"A Book of Librarians"
"A Collection of Librarians"
"A Catalog of Librarians"
"A Circulation of Librarians"
"A Knowledge of Librarians"
"A Resource of Librarians"
"An Authority of Librarians"

and even,
"A Library of Librarians"

Rather surprisingly, in today's world of computers and online information that dominates the contemporary library, not one person suggested

"A Network of Librarians"
"A Database of Librarians"
"A Web of Librarians"
"A Screen of Librarians"

Is there a message in this omission? Perhaps, but in the spirit of Gatherings, which is both a reflection of the Friends of the University Libraries as well as the "leaves of a book that are folded and stitched into one signature," possibly the real name for a group of information professionals is "A Gathering of Librarians."

James Lipton's centerfold from An Exaltation of Larks.
Cooperative Men and Library Ladies

By Sharon Carlson

[Sharon Carlson, the Director of the Archives & Regional History Collections, WMU, presented the following remarks on April 14, 1999, at the annual meeting of the Friends of the University Libraries.]

In the early 1980s, Helen Hooven Santmyer provided an entertaining narrative of a Xenia, Ohio, woman’s organization in her book ...and Ladies of the Club (Putnam, 1982). Possibly most important was the fact that her story also captured in print the social life and customs of a small midwestern community. Xenia’s organizations, in fact, were a mirror of societal norms for the nineteenth and early twentieth century. That mirror of reflection holds true for Michigan as well since this state was home to a fair number of women’s organizations, and, in particular, ladies’ library associations.

The ladies’ library associations not only reflected the intellectual and social life of the communities in which they operated, but they were able to provide educational opportunities for women, and went so far as to promote broader community projects which, in turn, involved the support of men. Published histories, organizational records, buildings, and the continuing legacies of the public libraries that were built on or benefited from the library associations speak to the cooperation between the women and men. Over one hundred Michigan communities at the turn of the century were heirs to the products of these organizations—educational, social, intellectual.

The Kalamazoo Ladies’ Library Association is a prime example of what these organizations were able to do. Although not officially organized until 1852, a group of women had operated informally for several years prior to that date. The actual establishment of an association predated the public library by twenty years, and the KLLA was the first library open to the Kalamazoo public albeit it was by subscription—something not uncommon to libraries across the country at that time. With the stated goals in their Articles of Association providing for the establishment and maintenance of a Library” to promote “moral and intellectual improvement” in Kalamazoo, the women quickly gained a prominent place in the community. From the beginning, membership was open to men and women who wished to take advantage of the library privileges. However, men could not hold office or attend the meetings.

One of the Association’s first distinctive roles occurred only a year after organization when the Village Board, consisting of men, asked them to coordinate the quarter-century celebration of Kalamazoo. This request recognized the ladies’ public role and involvement in the community; it was the beginning of a long and productive relationship with the governing men of Kalamazoo. The County Supervisors granted the women a room in the court house from 1854-1860. The Association outgrew their space three times, and each time was successful in gaining the governing men’s support for more rooms in which to operate the circulating library.

The status of the organization and its relationship with the village government changed in 1872 when the school library became a public library and began circulating books to all Kalamazoo residents. In 1873, the Village Board concluded that it could no longer make inexpensive rooms available to the Association, so the ladies and the men decided that funds should be raised to construct a fine, separate, brick building. The ladies were ultimately responsible for the final plan which rested on their definitions of space needs and funding possibilities. Of course, the well-known male leaders of Kalamazoo were included in the planning discussions. When it was time for the actual fund-raising, the minutes report that the planning committee was going to contact several husbands and invite them to “cooperate” or “assist” as needed.

The women, reinforced by solid community approval, succeeded in their fund-raising venture and raised the $8,000 needed to construct the building that still stands today in downtown Kalamazoo. A plaque near the entrance points out that this fine edifice was the first in the nation to be constructed as a Ladies’ Library. As intended, influential men of the community played an important role in the fund-raising. Their efforts were rewarded when it came time to dedicate the building. The accounts indicated that the women appointed Judge Hezekiah Wells as the “president of the evening,” and from thereon permitted “the husbands and fathers” to give “all the entertaining speeches.” The women stood out of the spotlight “like true hostesses.”

Another interesting case study of cooperative men and library ladies can be seen just a few miles north of Kalamazoo in the town of Otsego in southeast Allegan County. The Otsego Ladies’ Library Association was formed in 1870s to augment the township library. In its earliest days, the organization rented a room for their library over a store in the downtown area. In the 1880s, no doubt encouraged by the Kalamazoo success, the idea of building a permanent library surfaced. The women canvassed the town’s businessmen to determine if this were a feasible idea; it was. In fact, the town’s businessmen agreed to take a lease on a piece of land if the money could be raised for a building.

The women put their heads together and came up with some novel ideas that raised eyebrows—and funds—and thrust them into the national spotlight in 1892. One kind of fund raiser had the women... Continued on page 6
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selling services such as making candy, trimming coffins, blacking shoes, and washing the milk wagons—or they sold a product such as doughnuts that they had made. A few brave ladies rented an organ and gave public performances on the streets of Otsego—much to the chagrin of the more conservative townspeople. After their fund-raising efforts, the ladies had a meeting in which each described what she had done to raise a dollar for the building. The “reports” turned out to be so entertaining that the ladies decided to repeat it for the public. Of course, they charged admission, and called it an Experience Social. At the public social, someone took notes and the activities of the women were reported to and published in a Chicago newspaper—the nationwide publicity began. Other major newspapers, including the Police Gazette, featured the story, and the end result was that funds and books arrived from all over the United States.

The building was built and opened in 1892 with a gala affair that attracted a capacity crowd to hear the addresses, recitations, and music. The building became the cultural center of Otsego. It also became the center of controversy only a few short years later when, in 1895, the women decided to raise more funds. Their activities, this time, resulted in condemnation by one of the town’s ministers. Apparently, a performance of the short play Spanish Student featured members of the organization wearing tights—including the married wives of prominent townsmen and unmarried school teachers. The play, said the minister, was “hellish;” the women were lambasted for stooping to such means to raise funds!

The controversy spread to other nearby media outlets, specifically the Kalamazoo Telegraph, where stories were embellished with quotations from the minister—and responding comments from the Ladies’ Library Association of Otsego. Eventually, the whole issue subsided especially since the townsmen defended their spouses and the other ladies involved. A prominent paper mill owner wrote an editorial lauding the women’s efforts. The women artfully avoided further scandal by respectfully declining an invitation to perform the play in the neighboring community of Plainwell.

Each of the one hundred or so Ladies’ Libraries Associations of Michigan has a story that inevitably involves cooperative men and the library ladies. The Kalamazoo and Otsego buildings remain very tangible testaments to the clubs that enriched the lives of small-town women at the turn of the century. The library association building was a place where women networked—if not for the first time, at least in a supportive atmosphere that focused their efforts. The organizations sought and received solid support from the men of the community who believed in the goals of the associations. This intriguing interplay occurred within the Victorian world of “proper gender behavior” where women and men knew the bounds of respectability—and usually traveled within them. Yet, on occasion, and more and more often as one century ended and another began, the limits were stretched. The Ladies’ Library Associations were a small but significant component of the evolution of society.

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