A Great Library ... A Great University

By Lance Query

[Dean Lance Query arrived at Western Michigan University in 1993. His first commentary in Gatherings was published in the Fall 1993, issue and was entitled "A Great University ... A Great Library." Seven years later, Dean Query is leaving WMU for the position of Dean of Libraries and Academic Information Resources at Tulane University, New Orleans. The following commentary reviews some highlights of his WMU career.]

In the Fall 1993 Gatherings, I observed that Western Michigan University had elected the most ambitious of all courses in higher education: to be a research university while at the same time recognizing the importance of quality teaching for undergraduate and graduate students, traditional and non-traditional students. In support of the University's mission, the Libraries, too, had to undertake a most ambitious course. We needed to build quality collections (starting from a more modest base than most research universities), and provide access to information in all formats whether paper, electronic, or multi-media. Moreover, we had to educate our students and faculty in the use of the powerful tools that enable them to obtain the information they need not only for today, but also, and equally important, for their future roles as productive and fulfilled members of our society.

Nearly seven years later, it is appropriate for me to take a measure of how far we have come in meeting our goals, and how far we have yet to go. Let's look at our collections and access to information, our services to our users, and our instructional programs.

There is no question that our collections and access to information resources are much stronger today, and we have every reason to think they will grow stronger during the first decade of the 21st century. Every year during the past seven years we have increased our library materials budget by double digits. I know of no other academic library that can make a similar claim for the same period. We can give thanks to two enlightened presidents and two equally supportive provosts for a materials budget that has increased from $2.2 million to $4.2 million since fiscal year 1993. That has resulted in a net gain of over 700 journal subscriptions, numerous electronic and print databases, and a healthy monograph acquisition rate. All this has been happening at a time when many other colleges and universities have had to cut journal subscriptions and/or subsidize them by acquiring fewer monographs.

While there is no substitute for healthy budgets, money alone cannot explain Western Michigan University's strengthening of its collections. Discernment and intelligence in collection management by librarians aided by instructors and staff are the real stuff of which responsive collections are built. A revitalized liaison program between librarians and the teaching faculty has done much to insure that our collections meet the curricular and research needs of our students and faculty. Careful analysis of the impact of new degree programs and research trends on our collections has enabled us to anticipate where we need to obtain new resources. We have attempted, with considerable success, not to respond by cutting back some parts of the collection in order to support new programs. Qualitative and quantitative analyses by librarians, and a recent inventory provide reasonable assurance that our collection funds have been expended judiciously.

Funding for libraries has been important in our success. Indeed, among Michigan's fifteen public universities, Western Michigan University ranks first in terms of the percentage of appropriated university funds that are allocated to libraries. Increasingly important is a library's ability to leverage its materials budget through consortial purchasing agreements. For too long, libraries have negotiated with publishers alone. The result has been that we have been spending more and acquiring less as inflation in the cost of library materials has exceeded the growth of funding. Michigan's university libraries have been at a particular disadvantage vis-a-vis many other states; Michigan does not have a central body of regents that can

Continued on page 2
mandate or at least encourage cooperation among institutions. Universities like Western Michigan University are at another disadvantage inasmuch as the larger institutions with larger library budgets have historically had little reason to enter cooperative purchasing agreements with their smaller counterparts. However, important changes have taken place during the past years including the AccessMichigan project, and formation of the Michigan Academic Library Council, which have made consortial purchasing a reality. The WMU Libraries, I am proud to say, has been at the forefront in these statewide efforts. Consortial purchasing, combined with computer technology, has enabled us to make important progress in our goal of enabling our students and faculty to obtain the information they need when and where they need it.

Services to users have always distinguished the truly strong libraries from the rest. At WMU, the library staff takes special pride in providing excellent services. These include, among many:

- acquisitions and processing of materials, which can be effectively retrieved through use of our Web-based, cutting-edge online catalog and WWW site;
- expanded library hours with professional staffing as well as number of hours open to users;
- specialized services for our off-campus students that are on a par with services provided to on-campus students;
- constantly evolving and improved WWW access with a state-of-the-art home site (http://www.wmich.edu/library/);
- multiple creative uses of the latest technology to facilitate information literacy projects, location of resources, searching internal and external databases, online subject guides to discipline-oriented data, interlibrary lending; and reference services of all kinds including online reference;
- a preservation program for special collections and the Libraries that involves the conditions in which books are housed and repairs to books themselves; and
- a Visual Resources Library that is fast becoming known and respected nationally for its access to local and international graphical/pictorial data.

Given such a list of developing services, one comment must be added. I am concerned that our relative low level of staffing (WMU ranks among the two or three worst of the fifteen Michigan universities in ratio of librarians and library staff to students) will limit our ability to continue to provide the level of services our users have come to expect and will need in the future. The academic research library is a labor-intensive enterprise where, like the rest of our society, technology has not reduced our need for skilled staff. Rather, technology has enabled the University Libraries to offer better collections, expanded access to information, and more responsive services to our users.

In the age of the Internet, we are drowning in information, but we are starving for knowledge. One especially significant focus of the University Libraries is an information literacy initiative that is designed to enable our students to become independent information seekers. The program is designed to enable our students to decide between what information is most appropriate to their needs—and not simply the information most readily available. This requires the cooperation of our instructional faculty in the design of the courses and assignments. While we have achieved promising results in a number of selected courses, the University and the Libraries still have a long way to go toward educating students to become information literate. This essential goal inevitably requires an institutional commitment toward a measurable outcome rather than the course by course approach. While I am proud that more students receive bibliographic instruction in more classes than at any other public university in Michigan other than University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, I am disappointed that WMU has not pioneered in making information literacy a requirement for its graduates as it did with computer literacy in the 1980s.

As I look back over the past seven years, I believe we in the University Libraries have achieved much. I believe we have been successful because we have concentrated on the fundamentals of excellence in collections, access, services, and instructions. We have remained focused on the needs of our users, the students, faculty, and staff. Supported magnificently by a central administration and faculty that recognizes and values strong libraries, a talented library faculty and staff have achieved as much as can reasonably be asked of them. We have built a solid foundation toward achieving one of the unchanging realities of higher education: there has never been a great university without a great library.
Who Needs Information Literacy Anyway?

By Judith M. Arnold

[Associate Professor Judith M. Arnold came to the University Libraries, WMU, in the fall of 1994. She was especially recruited to develop the Libraries' instructional program for students and faculty, and to promote "information literacy" for all graduates. During the past six years, Judith has steadily enhanced the quality and quantity of bibliographic instruction offered by the library as well as defining and advocating "information literacy for all." Professor Arnold, to our great regret, has moved to Huntington, West Virginia, where she holds the position of Extension Services Librarian at Marshall University. This last article by her for Gatherings re-examines her philosophy.]

Throughout the country, university-wide initiatives for library instruction programs on campuses, such as the University of Washington and the California state university system, are pursuing the goal of information literacy for their graduates. Just what is information literacy and why is it valued as a desirable trait in a college graduate? The American Library Association (ALA) appointed a task force to define an information literate person.

"To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed, and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." (American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. [Final Report] found at http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilil1st.html)

Information literacy is a goal that begins with libraries, but one that impacts the essence of a college education, and what it means to be an informed citizen, equipped with lifelong, information-seeking, and evaluation skills. To achieve the goal requires university-wide endorsement and participation. In their article, "Information Literacy as a Liberal Art," Shapiro and Hughes propose that information literacy, more inclusive than mere technical expertise, be viewed as...

was to the educated person in medieval society. (Edcom Review, 31, #2, March/April 1996, p. 33)

Information literacy conceived in this way clearly involves more than facility with the computer. Today's students arrive with ever-increasing sophistication in using the computer, but do they know how to find complete, current, and reliable information and to use it effectively? To understand the significance of information literacy, imagine for a moment a world without it and how your life might be impacted.

You arrive at work and check your e-mail. A co-worker has forwarded a message that really worries you. The e-mail references a web page that describes how shampoo and other "sudsy" products such as soaps contain a harmful substance that causes brain damage in laboratory animals. The page warns that there might be similar effects on humans, and the Director of a major Health Sciences Library signs it. At lunchtime you run home and check all of your products. Every single one has the offending substance. You toss out over $50 worth of shampoo, soaps, and bath gels!

Following this you head for lunch at your favorite neighborhood restaurant. You are dismayed to see that the line for a table stretches out the front door. You are starving! While waiting in line you ask others why there is a line. Someone ahead of you says that the reservation system has just been automated, but that it has, ironically, slowed things down. When you finally reach the front of the line and ask for a reservation, the host asks for your automobile license plate number. You laugh and search your brain but cannot recall the number. You give your name but the person responds that the computer entry is by license number not name. You ask, "Why in the world would any system be set up in this way?" The person responds, "Oh, our new manager came up with the idea. He was doing a paper for his class and found an article about this reservation system. "Weren't there better ways than asking for a piece of information that no one remembers?" you respond. The host replies, "Oh, he wasn't looking for the best way, just the first one he could find."

Now you've developed indigestion from rushing around and then waiting so long to eat. You decide to stop off at your doctor's office and ask for something to settle your stomach. After a quick check of her computer terminal, your healthcare provider tells you to take two aspirins and call her in the morning. You look at her in a puzzled manner. "What's the matter?" she asks.

"Is that really the best remedy for indigestion?" you ask. "It's the one remedy that my online Medline suggests that was full-text. I didn't have the time to go get the other articles in the library. Besides, that's such a drag. Online articles are so much easier to use," she replies.

Far-fetched? Perhaps. But some truth is at the heart of these exaggerations. Information literate individuals do not accept information unquestioningly. They evaluate their sources. They review available information and select relevant, current, and authoritative sources, not the first item that comes along. And, they investigate all information, not just the quick and easy Internet or full-text solution. In this information age when an overabundance of information is available, critical thinking and skillful searching are lifelong learning skills for today's graduate. Such skills can be used in the workplace to handle professional goals, and in the personal realm when projects like buying a new car or learning about the treatment for a disease present the need to locate timely, reliable, and comprehensive information.

As a follow-up to a retreat on information literacy in early 1996, a University Libraries' task force spent a year refining the ALA definition and defining competencies that comprise an information literate person. The conclusions are found in a document, "What is Information Literacy and Why Should I Care about it?" that is located at http://www.wmich.edu/library/insti/info-lit.html. The Libraries'

Continued on page 4
Instruction Program is one effort to help students develop information literacy skills. The Labyrinth online tutorial used with University 101, a class designed to prepare beginning students for the college experience, presents some of the basic principles that help students to locate and select information. These principles are re-enforced and expanded in library instruction for ENGL 105, BIS 142, and IME 102, basic writing courses taught in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, and Engineering. With limited class time, the challenge to introduce resources, searching skills, and critical evaluation in 50-60 minutes is daunting if not impossible. Faculty knows that introductory sessions can be only a beginning. As is true of the University-wide concept of “writing through the disciplines,” information literacy is best developed through many courses, and at both introductory and upper division levels.

Beyond providing instruction in introductory level courses, librarians collaborate with faculty to introduce majors to the important research tools in the disciplines. Several departments are enthusiastic participants in courses such as HIST 190, WMS [women’s studies] 200, and JRN [journalism] 200. Many courses found in other majors could benefit from similar instruction. A Web-based Criminal Justice tutorial (http://unix.cc.wmich.edu/libweb/vander/cj/index.html) is a further example of librarian-faculty collaboration to enable students to learn how to find and evaluate information in their major disciplines. Still another initiative is the Subject Guides to Resources page on the Libraries’ Web site (http://www.wmich.edu/library/ssr/index.html), a series of over 40 guides created by the Libraries’ subject liaison librarians. Important print and electronic resources are selected, described, and organized into gateways designed to serve as starting points for research. Course assignments that require students to utilize these gateways can further increase their effectiveness.

Since 1994, the Libraries’ instruction program has grown from 200 to over 500 sessions per year. Major increases in basic level instruction for ENGL 105 and the other freshman level writing courses account for a significant portion of this growth. The focus of every class must be to use the World Wide Web interface to find information in our own Libraries and “everywhere else.”

The Web is a wonderfully rich information resource, providing a wealth of governmental and business information as well as unique primary resources. Students are ready, willing and highly motivated to find and use resources on the World Wide Web. Today’s Web is the only way to access all of the University Libraries’ unique collections, as well as providing gateways and portals to the entire Internet. Helping students and all users to become information literate, to select appropriate Web resources, and learn to use important and indispensable library print sources and electronic databases are what information literacy is all about. Information literacy is a laudable, ambitious, and essential goal for all educational institutions. The University Libraries’ instruction efforts are only a beginning step. Collaboration with the entire University community to develop and re-enforce information literacy throughout the curriculum is absolutely essential if we, the educators, are to realize the goal of information literacy: a world where the first and the easiest information found is by-passed for the best available.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Uses—Part III

Looking for an image to illustrate student papers and professors’ lectures has once again gotten easier. The Visual Resources Library, the newest branch of the University Libraries, located in 2213 Sangren Hall, started filling these needs on a University-wide basis in June 1997. In just three years, members of the WMU community have watched the Visual Resources Library evolve from a limited slide collection stored in the Art Department of the Fine Arts college into a comprehensive and modern collection located in a facility designed to meet the instructional needs of the University. The library began with slides from one discipline, added many more slides from other fields, incorporated a major picture file, and now promotes two significant electronic image collections. Let me introduce you in this article to our new electronic services.

During the 1998/99 academic year, the University Libraries took part as a beta-site for the AMICO Library. At that time, the Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO) consisted of 25 museums in North America. This consortium created an electronic image and text catalog of 20,000 works of art from their collections. The catalog was delivered to test sites, including WMU, via the Web. As a beta-site, the University Libraries was able to examine AMICO and its capabilities as well as to make a contribution to the further development of the product. WMU Libraries’ contribution was a User’s Guide to assist patrons in using this electronic collection by suggesting uses for the AMICO library, search strategies, and

Continued on page 5
Archiving International School Library History

By Sharon Carlson

In 1971 Dr. Jean E. Lowrie, head of WMU’s School of Librarianship, and several international school library leaders founded the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) at a conference of the World Organization of Councils of the Teaching Professions in Kingston, Jamaica. IASL is a voluntary, professional association, whose mission is the worldwide promotion of school-based libraries. IASL now has 800 members in over 70 countries around the world.

The contributions of IASL are well documented in the dissertation of Dr. Rebecca Knuth, Indiana University, 1995. The International Association has been especially successful in its role as a clearing-house, forum, and disseminator of information. Although its main focus is to provide support and encouragement to librarians in developing countries, IASL has also been a voice of advocacy for broad social movements such as the goal of universal literacy.

Dr. Lowrie retired in 1983 after a distinguished thirty-two year career at Western Michigan University. She served as a faculty member or Director of the School of Librarianship (originally the Department of Librarianship and later the School of Library and Information Science) from 1958 to 1983. Lowrie stayed active professionally in her retirement, and continued to serve as the Executive Secretary of IASL until 1996. The official headquarters for IASL was also located at Western Michigan University until that date. When Lowrie passed the baton to a new Executive Secretary, she deposited all of her records with the University Archives. Among the historical records located in the Archives are papers documenting her founding role in IASL and the official records and publications of the organization.

Gerald R. Brown has now provided additional documentation to the Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections. Brown, who earned a Master of Library Science from WMU in 1967, has had his own distinguished career in Canadian school librarianship. He became an active member of IASL including ten year's of service, 1989-1999, on the IASL Executive Board. Brown, who lives and works as a private educational consultant in Winnipeg, Canada, developed an electronic database index of over 4,000 IASL records, which can be sorted by author, subject, date, recipient, and relationships to IASL. A print index has also been produced and is on deposit at the Western Michigan University Archives.

Brown arrived in Kalamazoo on a warm day last summer to deliver the index and six linear feet of other IASL documents that he accumulated during his service on the Executive Board. Brown had traveled hundreds of miles to insure the safe transport of the records. Jerry Brown was asked why he had not only delivered the materials in person, but provided an extensive index—thus saving the Archives Staff substantial time in processing the records. He replied: “It was obviously a labor of love. When you feel strongly about things like IASL’s work, you are willing to take time to do the job thoroughly.”

The Archives is pleased to add this collection to other organizations that have placed materials on deposit. Papers of the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, the

Continued on page 6
A Picture is Worth...
Continued from page 5

print version, but also incorporates the Bridgeman image library and links to Web images. Its best advantage is that this valuable tool links users to sites that are relevant to the subject at hand. In other words, it links to sites that have been evaluated for content so that the user does not have to page through electronic page after electronic page of Web sites yielding only marginal information. Information from Grove is succinct, well documented, and illustrated. Many of these image links take the user directly to Web sites of the institution that owns a pivotal work of art.

The Bridgeman Art Library is a collection of fine art images collected from over 800 collections worldwide available for educational use. The *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* is working in partnership with the Bridgeman Library to bring high quality images to subscribers. This electronic collection is delivered as a fully searchable database within the *Grove Dictionary of Art Online*. Essentially, the *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* is two products delivered in one package.

Both the AMICO Library and *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* are updated regularly to ensure that patrons receive the most current information on artists, art movements, and works of art. AMICO Library and the *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* supplement print images such as plates in textbooks, slides from lectures, photographs, and posters.

The Visual Resources Library is providing an unusual set of resources in the online databases just described. Library patrons can try searching for images at any time through the home page of the University Libraries at URL http://www.wmich.edu/library/. At that point, click on ABOUT THE LIBRARIES, and open up the entry Visual Resources Library. Once you have found AMICO, here are some fascinating topics to search and learn how the databases work: carpets, Gobelins, Fauves, and Matisse.

Faculty who would like to request class instruction on these databases can do so by contacting the Visual Resources Library at 387-4111. Patrons can also drop by the Visual Resources Library in Sangren Hall for a demonstration of these new resources.

Archiving International School Library History
Continued from page 5

Kalamazoo Academy of Medicine, the Ladies' Library Association, the Kalamazoo Nature Center, and the Kalamazoo Association of Volunteer Administrators are among the organizational records at the Archives. While most of the organizational records at the Archives are regional, the placement of the IASL records at Western Michigan University makes sense given the relationship of the organization to Jean Lowrie, Gerald Brown, and WMU's former School of Library and Information Science. This international collection will benefit future researchers studying topics such as international librarianship, universal literacy, and voluntary organizations. The records are housed in the Archives at 111 East Hall on the East Campus off of Oakland Drive.

“My library was dukedom large enough.”
—Shakespeare, *The Tempest*