Our Amazing Libraries

Most individuals who come to the University Libraries or to the University as a whole are largely unaware of the unique resources, opportunities and collections that exist within the several locations that constitute the entity called the University Libraries—Waldo, the main building, and three branches: Music and Dance, Education, and Regional History and Archives. So, to pique your curiosity, a selection of facts about the University Libraries is presented.

—The library system at Western Michigan University receives a higher percentage of General Fund dollars than any other state university in Michigan. Currently, over 4.5% is allocated to the University Libraries, the average in Michigan is 3.64%. WMU believes that its library system is a top priority and basic to its mission. The total expenditure for collections in 1993-94 was $2,305,903. As a result, the University Libraries is the fourth in size and diversity in Michigan; it holds 3,205,619 titles.

—The Library Faculty and staff provide hundreds of informational/instructional presentations to University classes and other constituent users each year. Recent data indicate that only the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, provides more opportunities to achieve information literacy than the University Libraries. Nearly 8,000 users attended sessions and workshops in any recent year. Thousands more have received individualized instruction or learned research techniques through a hypermedia tutorial found in Waldo.

—The University Libraries, in 1994-95, received 5,533 periodical subscriptions. The library catalog, Finder, identifies these titles as “serials”; users access them through 1,387 databases found in a variety of formats from paper to microforms to CD-roms to online systems. If the material is not available in the Libraries’ collections, the Resource Sharing Office will obtain the material within a few days. Last year the Office processed over 12,800 requests for students, faculty, and staff.

—An approval plan that is based on the needs of current undergraduate and graduate curricula automatically supplies 52% of the books and monographs added each year. The remaining 48% come from faculty and staff requests as well as gifts. In 1994-95, $787,164 was spent on new books. Moreover, that year saw the acquisition of more books than in any previous year in the Libraries’ history.

—The University Libraries has its own home page on the Web. To discover even more about the amazing University Libraries, access http://www.w.mich.edu/library.

University Library Friends:
Making a Difference

Although the Friends of the University Libraries at Western Michigan University has a relatively short history as an organization, their impact is definitely a positive one on the library system. During the past year, membership has increased significantly and the funds raised from contributions and the November 17, 1995 used book sale have been put to good use. Key book acquisitions that resulted from the Friends’ contributions responded to a request noted in the last issue of Gatherings. An article in the Winter 1996 issue, prepared by Dr. Paul Szarmach, Director of WMU’s Medieval Institute, described the need for the purchase of volumes found in the set, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile. The Friends have approved the acquisition of two of the titles that Dr. Szarmach identified as basic to the medieval studies program.

Two special requests for the Maybee Music and Dance Library also drew attention from the organization. As a result, the Friends have funded the purchase of the second edition of The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music (New England Pub. Associates), and the first two volumes of The Operas. Selections (Broude Brothers, 1994) that will provide a comprehensive set of scores, librettis, and commentaries of the works of W.S. Gilbert and Sir. Arthur Sullivan. The first score, Trial by Jury, is already available for use in the music library. The Friends were also involved in addressing another library need, a display screen to enhance the exhibits prepared by the Rare Book and Special Collections staff. As many visitors to the library have discovered, the third floor atrium of Waldo Library is the setting for unusual and unique displays of material selected from the special collections found in the University Libraries—as well as personal libraries. The topical variety of the exhibits is wide-ranging. World War II German newspapers and history, Martin Luther King—the man and the Day, 15th century illustrated manuscripts, early 20th century autographs of famous individuals, women’s suffrage and suffragettes of West Michigan, and other illustrative resources have been highlighted.

Finally, in their continuing efforts to service the wider Kalamazoo community of library users, the Friends of the University Library will again provide sponsorship and financial support for the annual Kalamazoo Area Libraries National Library Week program. This year, Pulitzer prize winner Jane Smiley was the major guest, she presented a free lecture on April 18th. For those who are intrigued by the morays of academic institutions, her recent, fictional dissection of a not-so-imaginary state university is a must read. Moo (Knopf, Distributed by Random house, 1995) is available from several local libraries as well as regional bookstores.

The current governing board of the Friends of the University Libraries includes: Leta C. Schoenhals, President; Mary Ann Bowman, Vice President; Kristen Tyrrell, Secretary; Bettina S. Meyer, Treasurer; William W. Combs, Director; Robert J. Hahn, Director; and Hazel M. DeMeyer Rupp, Director. Kristen Tyrrell serves as ex officio member of the Board. If you are not already a member, please complete and return the Membership form included in this issue of Gatherings, and become a part of our activities and contributions to the University Libraries.