The following commentary is from a speech prepared by James Dexheimer on the occasion of his retirement from the University Libraries. When the party was in the planning stages, Jim requested that time be given for him to make a “few remarks.” Most of us who listened to Jim deliver the speech were awestruck and inspired when he delivered it at his retirement party on December 8, 2011. The speech summed up his life with books and people and the often interesting intersections of the two. Sadly, Jim passed away at his Kalamazoo home on January 2, 2012. He was born in Buffalo, New York, on September 13, 1951. He graduated from Tonawanda High School (New York) and attended Valparaiso University. Jim earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Western Michigan University and also completed the University of Virginia’s Rare Book School.

I always regarded Jim as a Renaissance man and given his two interesting and disparate careers, it may be true. He worked for the Lauck Pipe Organ Company from 1977 to 1990 as a woodworker, building and installing numerous instruments throughout southwestern Michigan. In 1992, he began working for the Western Michigan University Libraries. He held the positions of secretary at the Archives and Regional History Collections, stacks manager, and assistant director of Operational Services. His position at the time of his retirement was Coordinator of Special Collections Cataloging, where he worked with foreign language materials, rare books and manuscripts, and archival collections. Beyond the many friends and University colleagues, Jim is survived by his mother Marjorie of Lancaster, New York; sister Carol (Rev. Kevin) Walrath of Carlisle, Ontario; his nephews Paul (Sarah), Joel, Mark, and his niece Miriam.

—Sharon Carlson, December 2012

Quid Tum?

By Jim Dexheimer, Remarks at a Retirement Reception, December 2011.

Wow! A life becomes a footnote—and 20 years here at the Waldo Library is reduced to a few minutes of sincere “thank you’s,” and a short explanation of what I was up to during the past years.

Life is difficult, complicated, and, for the most part, uncontrollable. Life is what happens when you are planning for the future. But, I think most of us buy into a little intellectual conceit. We have a simple secret or a pithy aphorism that reduces the chaos to a reasonable level: religious faith, personal philosophy, working hypothesis, or a “shit happens” bumper sticker. Mine is quid tum.

Like almost all kids, I loved to read. Never stopped.

Early on career choice—none—only job title I can assign now would be “Smarty-Pants.” I wanted to know it all!

My dad—German heritage of self-learning, electronics texts to self educate as an electronics engineer, and edification from the Bible. Mom—French, and her reading at that time was slightly more lofty—current fiction, stories, poetry.