This issue of Gatherings is a tribute to Dr. Laurel Grotzinger upon her retirement from Western Michigan University after more than a half century of dedicated service and leadership.

I first became acquainted with Dr. Grotzinger in 1984 through the Woman Researcher Conference at Western Michigan University. Dr. Grotzinger, as Dean of the Graduate College and Chief Research Officer, was instrumental in organizing this event, which involved the collaboration of several units on campus. The Woman Researcher Conference was an annual event through the 1980s and brought female researchers from across the country to Western Michigan University. The structure of the conference provided a forum for beginning and unpublished scholars to present their findings, as well as experienced women researchers. This was an innovative and much needed forum in the 1980s, as it provided opportunities for conference participants to learn about areas of particular concern to women involved in research. As an undergraduate, this opened my eyes in ways that radically differed from my classroom experiences. Little did I know that this was the beginning of a relationship that would profoundly shape my professional and intellectual life.

The Woman Researcher Conference was a microcosm of Dr. Grotzinger’s commitment to research and scholarship. On a state level, Dr. Grotzinger has promoted research through her leadership in the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts & Letters. She also served four one-year terms as President of the Michigan Academy—the only person in the 110-year history of the organization to do so. Nationally, Dr. Grotzinger has been actively involved with the Library History Round Table of the American Library Association and was involved with their first program on women’s issues held in 1974. Dr. Grotzinger’s involvement in the Library History Round Table stems from her dissertation research about the early library educator Katharine Sharp. Published as a monograph in 1966, The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp is an outstanding study that remains a classic in the field.

Her record of scholarship and commitment to research made her an obvious choice as a committee member when I began my own dissertation about the history of ladies’ library associations in Michigan. She served officially as an out-of-department adviser and reader. In reality, she was the committee member who made it possible for me to complete the dissertation. She was able to help me through some of the extremely difficult first drafts, as well as the political process of completing a dissertation. When Dr. Grotzinger returned to faculty in the University Libraries she continued to mentor me as a colleague. Over the years, she has provided sound professional advice and she has become a dear friend. Dr. Grotzinger’s influence will continue even as she takes on new challenges in retirement. Every time I work with a student and develop a mentoring relationship, I think about Dr. Grotzinger.

It is fitting that this issue of Gatherings be a tribute to Dr. Grotzinger. It was a publication she oversaw and edited for many years for the Friends of the University Libraries.