

CASE 1

Gaps and Inconsistencies: Issues in the Dissemination of the University Bulletin at the University of Michigan

AUTHOR: **NANCY DEROMEDI**
Associate Archivist, Bentley Historical Library,
University of Michigan (deromedi@umich.edu)

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ISSUE: Role of archive in assuring the consistency, in addition to the preservation and access, of information in records that are vital to the function of the university.

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Institutional Context

The [University of Michigan](#) was established in Detroit in 1817, and relocated to Ann Arbor in 1837. In addition to the main Ann Arbor campus, the University of Michigan has two satellite campuses. The [University of Michigan-Flint](#) opened in 1956, and the [University of Michigan-Dearborn](#) followed in 1958. In 2007, the total university enrollment for all three campuses approximates 55,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The University is comprised of 19 schools and colleges. In the last academic year, over 13,000 degrees were awarded. The university research expenditures total over [\\$700,000 million](#).¹

The [University Library](#) has nineteen libraries within its system and several independent libraries including the [Bentley Historical Library](#). Established in 1935 by the University of Michigan Regents, the Bentley Historical Library has two functions: to serve as the official archives of the University and to document the history of the state of Michigan and the activities of its people, organizations and voluntary associations. The Bentley is comprised of three divisions: the Michigan Historical Collections, the University Archives and Records Program, and Access and Reference Services. The Bentley Library reports to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. Bentley Library staff that were involved at some level in this case study included Francis Blouin, Nancy Bartlett, Brian Williams, Marilyn McNitt, and Nancy Deromedi.

Background

Academic program requirements (hereafter program requirements) are defined in what is called the university “bulletin” or general catalog. For example, program requirements outline how many credits and what subjects a student needs to complete in order to receive a degree in an academic program within a specific school or college. At the University of Michigan, the bulletin is positioned as a contract between the university and the student with regard to the definition and program requirements.

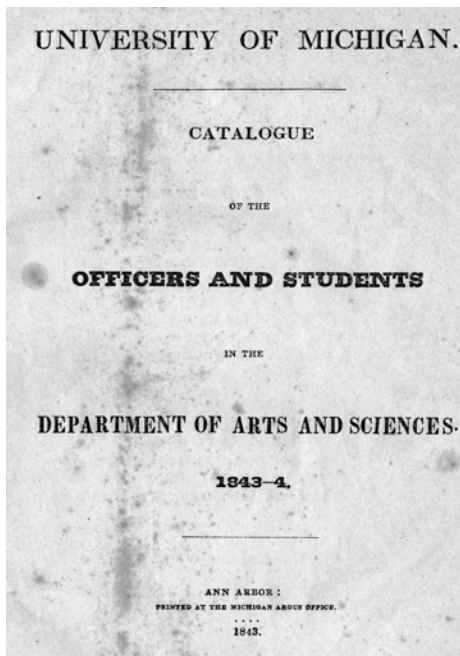
Information in the bulletin is just as vital for current students as it is for university alumni. Alumni seeking advanced degrees need program requirement information for transfer credit purposes. For example, if a student that started a doctoral program at Michigan decided to finish that degree at another institution, the student would need to show the types of courses that had already been completed at Michigan. Fact-checking is another fundamental use of program requirements. Employers verify degree information with actual courses taken. Lastly, reaccreditation is a significant use of program requirements. In certain health-related fields, alumni need information on the courses they took for purposes of obtaining accreditation in another state.

¹ Did you Know?..., University of Michigan Communicator’s Forum, [<http://mmd.umich.edu/forum/know.html>] (Last viewed 11/27/07).

Over the last one hundred and fifty years, the bulletin has changed in form and in name. This case study is about the most recent and paramount change in the publication of program requirements. That change is the process of migrating program requirements from a regularly published controlled “bulletin” format to a web-based publication. Unlike earlier changes, the move to a web-based publication introduced issues of consistency across multiple formats and the retention of information on changed or deleted requirements. There was a sense that, since the information was on the web, changes could be made instantly—meaning that units could be more “responsive” to the need for change. At the same time this accelerated process meant a loss of the “discipline of print” that captured in a regular fashion a record of previous requirements.

Program Degree Requirements

Founded in 1817, The University of Michigan was first authorized to award the bachelor and Master of Arts degrees. The Board of Regents composed the original formal requirements for the degrees in 1843—the same year as the first graduating class. It is reported that requirements for the first Master of Arts degrees, awarded in 1849, followed English custom and were bestowed on individuals “who had preserved a good moral character and who had made application to the faculty, and whom the faculty had recommended.”² Requirements for degrees were listed in a publication titled “*Catalogue of the Officers and Students in the Department of Arts and Sciences.*” The first year of the publication was 1843. In this thin publication, one finds a list of the Board of Regents and faculty and students enrolled by class. Other categories of information included the university calendar, course of study and expenses—although there was “no charge for tuition.”³



Scanned image of 1843–4 University of Michigan Catalogue.

² *The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedia Survey*, Wilfred B. Shaw, Editor, Volume I: Degrees, p. 287.

³ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students in the Department of Arts and Sciences*, 1843, p. 12.

Immediately following the “*Catalogue of the Officers and Students in the Department of Arts and Sciences*” came the *University Announcement*. The *University Announcement* was a single-bound volume. This title continued until 1923 at which time the title was then changed to the *General Register and Catalogue*. However, as the university grew in size, the *General Register* likewise grew and by 1931 there was a call for a committee to oversee “official publications.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

The Degree of Bachelor of Science in Architecture

To earn the degree of Bachelor of Science in Architecture, the student must secure *one hundred and forty hours of credit** in a prescribed curriculum, as given below, four hours of which must be earned by four months practical experience in an architect's office. A time limit is not set, but four years are usually needed for the work required for the degree.

Candidates for degrees in Architecture and in Architectural Engineering enroll in the College of Architecture upon entering the University. They elect one of the three four-year programs of study, which are substantially identical for the first year.

HOURS CREDIT REQUIRED IN THE THREE FOUR-YEAR PROGRAMS AND IN THE TWO-YEAR PROGRAM FOR SPECIAL STUDENTS IN ARCHITECTURE

One hour of credit represents ordinarily about three hours of actual work during each week of one semester.

| ARCHITECTURE: | I | II | III | Spl. |
|---|----|----|-----|------|
| Elements of design | 3 | 3 | 3 | .. |
| Architectural design | 31 | 37 | 17 | 23 |
| Allied arts design | 3 | 3 | .. | .. |
| History of architecture | 8 | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Office work | 4 | 4 | 4 | .. |
| CONSTRUCTION: | | | | |
| Structural mechanics | 6 | 6 | 7 | .. |
| Roofs and bridges, and framed structures.. .. | .. | .. | 5 | .. |
| Construction (elementary) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Structural design (steel) | 5 | 5 | 2 | .. |
| Masonry and reinforced concrete | 4 | 4 | 5 | .. |
| Testing materials | .. | .. | 2 | .. |
| Chemistry of materials | .. | .. | 3 | .. |
| Surveying | .. | .. | 2 | .. |
| BUILDING EQUIPMENT: | | | | |
| Building sanitation | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Heating and ventilation | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Heat engines | .. | .. | 4 | .. |

* One credit hour indicates for each week during one semester one recitation or lecture with two hours of preparation or three hours of drawing or laboratory work.

Example of Degree Requirements from the 1923–4 *General Register and Catalogue*.

In 1931, the Board of Regents appointed a Committee on Official Publications with the charge over all “official publications of the university.”⁴ All editorial work on official publications would be handled by the staff in the Registrar’s office and “subject to the authority of the committee.” Centralized oversight of the process seemed to ensure a measure of consistency in “official” university publications for a period of time. By the late 1950s, however, this committee seems to have dissolved.⁵ In 1963, however, the issue of publications arose again with a charge to a new committee. The name of this newly formed committee seems to clearly spell out its mission—it was the Committee on University Publication Problems.⁶

The Committee on University Publication Problems was to survey practices and costs involved in producing publications to “form an opinion whether present practices, are, on the whole satisfactory, or whether other alternatives should be considered.”⁷ Main findings from the comprehensive study of publications showed that the publications “reflect not only the varied needs of the several units but the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the several schools and units.” In the report conclusions, the committee noted that they had no evidence that the “publishing affairs are seriously out of order but we do observe that they are receiving little guidance or systematic attention from any quarter.” It was recommended that because publications “are of such paramount importance in gaining recognition and respect for the University, they would seem to deserve more deliberate attention from the University administration than they now receive.”⁸

The outcome of this report was to make an existing office, University Publications, the “focal point for a concerted effort to establish University-wide editorial and production standards for its non-scholarly publications.” These standards induced style and format guidelines. A look at the publications that had been created by departments during that time period reveals that there does not seem to be a consistent look and feel to the non-scholarly publications. The publications are marked as an official university publication and each publication is numbered and dated. This system seems to have been manageable until the mid-1970s when the official publications series ends.

Further Decentralization with Desktop Publishing

With no centralized oversight or standards in place, publication of the bulletin became a decentralized process from the 1970s onward. The introduction of desktop computing further encouraged the departments, schools and colleges to produce their own

⁴ The committee consisted of the managing editor of the University press, University Registrar and a faculty representative.

⁵ The exact date that the Committee on Official University Publications dissolves is unclear, however, the committee is not mentioned again in the Board of Regents proceedings after 1958.

⁶ Office of Vice-President for Academic Affairs record group, memo to F.H. Wagman from Roger W. Heyns and Michael Radock, April 18, 1963. Box 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Final report to Vice President Roger W. Heyns from Ad Hoc Committee on University Publication Problems, May 8, 1964. Box 1.

publications. In-house production would save time and would save money. Local systems grew exponentially during the 1980s as personal computers became more affordable.⁹

By the early 1990s, local and shadow systems were prevalent within the schools and colleges. In 1996, the university embarked on a project to migrate all administrative data systems to a new relational database architecture designed by PeopleSoft, Inc. In 1998, Bentley Library obtained funding for a two-year assistant archivist position to examine the implications of the student administration database for traditional paper-based records. This analysis resulted in identifying the functions and business processes affected by the change in the system. It also revealed that a policy decision had been made to decentralize the creation of a bulletin to the individual schools and colleges.¹⁰ This initial analysis also showed that the degree audit functionality of the system did not work and it was unknown how long it would take to have that functionality built into the system as originally planned.

Where initially it seemed that the migration to PeopleSoft would aid in centralizing the creation of the record, the policy decision actually reinforced the decentralized business model already in place at the university. Because the model would remain decentralized, a decision within the university archives, harking back to the 1963 survey done by the Committee on Publication Problems, was to take the time to closely examine what the publications patterns were for the nineteen schools and colleges.

University Archives Survey Publications: 1999

In 1999, the idea to survey publications was revisited once again. This survey consisted of having two members of the university archives staff look at the elements that had comprised the paper bulletin record from 1990 to 1999 for each of the nineteen schools and colleges.¹¹ A form was created that included all the data elements that the staff thought were common. These included: title, date, authority, admissions information, list of faculty, calendar, history of school or college, course description, course number, course name, course prerequisites, course fee, degree requirements, expenses, scholarships, enrollment, information on facilities, grading, and awards. One member of the staff looked through the paper record, checking off the elements found by year, while the other staff member looked at how and what the schools and colleges were publishing on the web. The findings from the study showed that the schedule for the publication of the paper bulletin varied. Some units no longer produced a printed version; others published a bulletin once every three years and all of the schools and colleges were publishing a form of the bulletin on the web. Only one school seemed to be capturing the

⁹ The Apple Lisa, the first computer with the icon and mouse-based graphical interface was introduced in 1983 followed by the Macintosh desktop computer in 1984 from *After 30 years, Apple is still crisp*, *The Ann Arbor News*, March 28, 2006. In an effort to fully immerse the campus in newer technologies, the University of Michigan began full-scale Apple Truckload sales or “computer kick-offs” to faculty and students in Fall term 1988.

¹⁰ Policy decisions were made for each of the business processes affected by PeopleSoft by a project management committee called the Project Management Lead Team.

¹¹ The two University Archives (UARP) staff members who worked on the survey were Marilyn McNitt and Nancy Deromedi.

electronic version of the bulletin. None of the academic units identified their publications (digital or printed) as the authoritative source.¹²

Overall, the survey showed inconsistent publication patterns in how often units created a bulletin and whether they transferred the bulletin to the university archives. Inconsistency was also found in the types of information included in the record across the academic units and within the academic units from year to year. The only consistency found in the survey was that all of the academic units were using the web as a means to disseminate bulletin type information. View samples of the data elements form for School of Art, School of Information and Law School in the appendix of this case study. This finding piqued our interest and we took two academic units to analyze how the information published in paper compared to current information posted on the web. This supplemental survey revealed numerous inconsistencies between what was published in print and what was published on the web.

First Steps: Inconsistency, Strategy, Awareness Raising

Gaps and inconsistencies in the creation and management of the record came as a surprise to the vice president for information technology management services, the vice provost for technology and the new university registrar. The abundance of gaps and inconsistency was viewed as an important issue. It was decided that the creation of the record of degree program requirements was a university-wide issue. Although it was discussed, it was decided not to mandate a policy that would govern the creation of the record. Instead, a “soft” awareness raising effort was launched. To do this, the vice provost for academic affairs placed the issue of “gaps and inconsistencies” of an important historical record on the agenda for the September 2003 meeting of Associate Provost and Associate Dean Group (APADG).

The vice provost asked each dean to see that the authoritative source for degree program requirements was identified and that a process for the systematic capture and transfer of the record to the university archives was determined. The project was launched as a partnership between [University Archives and Provost’s Office](#).

The main goals of the initiative were to have all nineteen schools and colleges identify which version of the bulletin (paper or digital) would be the authoritative version and to establish a systematic process for the transfer of the record whether in paper or digital form to the archives.

¹² This conclusion was made because the College of Literature, Science and the Arts had an online Bulletin Archive. Bulletins were made available in Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML) format.

Defining a Process in a Highly Distributed and Decentralized Environment

Starting in Fall 2003, the work defined by the Provost was to have the archives staff talk to each of the academic units about the identification and systematic transfer of the bulletin to the university archives. For some units, the identification of which version would be the authoritative one was easy, as several of the schools no longer produced a paper version.

For other units, this was not as easy mainly because the procedures used in creating the paper and the web version were procedures done in separate offices within the academic unit. For example, in the School of Art and Design the webmaster produced the digital version and the unit's editor produced the paper version. It was realized that the work to establish new procedures within the units would take time.

Analysis

Over the last three years, university archives staff has witnessed changes in routines within a highly decentralized environment. Change has been incremental however, and systematic transfers are not yet ingrained into each of the schools/colleges internal workflow. Most units will receive at least one e-mail communication reminding them of the need to transfer the bulletin. It may be that without a written policy or oversight committee that the issues encountered throughout the history of the bulletin will continue to affect the individualized and decentralized processes used in creating the record of program requirements. Those issues include lack of university-wide standards for publications, staff turnover and subsequent lack of internal memory and responsibilities. Changes in resources could quickly undermine the production of the record including continual changes in web technology such as the move to blogs and sophisticated databases and the lack of a policy that would serve to codify compliance.

Appendix

Data elements form for University of Michigan, School of Art, 1990–1999.

University of Michigan. School of Art. Publications, 1990-1999.

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruct | Prof | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C Prereq | C Instr | C Fees | Admiss | Degrees | Expen | Schola | Ext | Enro | Facil | Grading | Awards |
|------------------|------|------|-------|-----|----------|------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|--------|-----|------|-------|---------|--------|
| UM Bulletin 1990 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1991 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1992 | X | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1993 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1994 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1995 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1996 | X | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1997 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1998 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin 1999 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

University of Michigan. School of Art. Web Publications, 1999-

See: <http://www.umich.edu/~webteam/soad/>

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruct | Prof | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C Prereq | C Instr | C Fees | Admiss | Degrees | Expen | Schola | Ext | Enro | Facil | Grading | Awards |
|--------------------------------|------|------|-------|-----|----------|------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|--------|-----|------|-------|---------|--------|
| Art and Design Online Bulletin | 1999 | X | | X | | | X | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

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Data elements form for University of Michigan, School of Information, 1990–1999.

University of Michigan. School of Information. Publications, 1990-1999.

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruc | Profile | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C C | C Instr | C Fees | Admiss | Degree | Expense | Schol ar | Ext | Enrol | Facil | Grad Ing | Awards |
|-------------|------|------|-------|-----|---------|---------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|-----|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| UM Bulletin | 1990 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1991 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1992 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1993 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1994 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1995 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1996 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1997 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1998 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1999 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

University of Michigan. School of Information. Web Publications, 1999-

See:

(Handbook) Doctoral <http://www.si.umich.edu/academics/doctoral-handbook.htm>

(Handbook) Masters <http://www.si.umich.edu/academics/masters-handbook.htm>

Course Catalog: <http://finel.si.umich.edu/cfdocs/si/courses/course/catNum.cfm>

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruc | Profile | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C C | C Instr | C Fees | Admiss | Degree | Expense | Schol ar | Ext | Enrol | Facil | Grad Ing | Awards |
|------------------|------|------|-------|-----|---------|---------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|-----|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| Student Handbook | 1999 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |

Note: Course Catalog is a database

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Data elements form for University of Michigan, Law School, 1990–1999.

University of Michigan. Law School. Publications, 1990-1999.

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruct | Profile | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C Prereq | C Instr | C Fees | C Admiss | Degree s | Expense | Schola | Ext | Enrol | Facil | Gradin g | Award |
|-------------|------|------|-------|-----|----------|---------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|----------|---------|--------|----------|----------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| UM Bulletin | 1990 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1991 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1992 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1993 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1994 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1995 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1996 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1997 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1998 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| UM Bulletin | 1999 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |

University of Michigan. Law School. Web Publications, 1999-
See: <http://www.law.umich.edu/students/handbook/>

| Title | Date | Auth | Offic | Cal | Instruct | Profile | Hist | C Desc | C # | C Name | C T/D | C Place | C Prereq | C Instr | C Fees | C Admiss | Degree | Expense | Schola | Ext | Enrol | Facil | Gradin | Award |
|---------------------|------|------|-------|-----|----------|---------|------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|----------|---------|--------|----------|--------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Law School Handbook | 1998 | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| | 2000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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Does your university archives have born-digital records?

Share how you are effectively managing these digital records by submitting a case study to *Campus Case Studies*.

Visit [Hwww.archivists.org/publications/epubs/CampusCaseStudies/](http://www.archivists.org/publications/epubs/CampusCaseStudies/).