



Photo courtesy of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries and Pure Michigan

February 21, 2010

Dear Fellow Genealogists:

As you may be aware, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) issued a letter on Friday, February 12, 2010, regarding the status of the Library of Michigan and its various collections.

On Wednesday, February 17, 2010, I met with Michigan's State Librarian, Nancy Robertson. The reality is grim. The library is facing a 23 percent cut in funding. This cut has forced MDE to examine what collections and services the library provides, and what the core functions of a state library are as stated in Michigan law. Based on that, MDE has determined what collections/services currently housed in the library fit the identified core services and which do not. It was a difficult and painful choice for them to make. Unfortunately, it was decided that while the non-Michigan genealogical collection and the Federal Documents collection are valuable, they do not fit into the core functions of a state library, nor is it mentioned in the state's constitution that the state must provide those collections/services. The Library is also facing a 13-person reduction in staff. They will have gone from 100 staff at its height, to 30 as of October 1, 2010.

Ms. Robertson also informed me that the library will become a non-circulating library. This means that they no longer need the second copy of items from the Michigan collection. Therefore, the second copies will go with the Genealogical collection. The items that do remain in the library's possession will be consolidated to the 4th and 5th floors.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) has invited Council to send a representative to the meetings of the Michigan Center for Innovation and Reinvention Board (MCIR) as an observer, and we have been informed that we will be allowed to have limited time for comment. Dr. Frank Boles, Director of the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University, a respected professional in the librarian and historical communities, has agreed to represent Council and the genealogy community as our spokesperson.

During times of crises, a process needs to be followed. The first step is information gathering, the second is evaluation, the third is negotiations, and the fourth is action. The MGC is currently working on gathering and evaluating information. While we understand that the community is outraged, we ask that everyone remain calm and let our spokesperson, Dr. Frank Boles communicate with the MCIR Board that is involved in the potential uses of the Historical Center.

Many alternative scenarios have been mentioned; however, MGC's goals are that the collections remain under one roof and under state control. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact MGC at migencouncil@att.net.

Thank you for your patience during this time of turmoil. We will continue to keep you updated as events unfold.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Grostick, President
Michigan Genealogical Council