

# GEORGETOWN

C O L L E G E

Dr. Richard Crofts

12 March 2009

Interim President

Council on Postsecondary Education

1024 Capital Center Dr., Suite 320

Frankfort, KY 40601-8204

Dear Dr. Crofts:

This letter is in regards to the Kentucky Digital Library (KDL) and the new Kyleidoscope project.

I am writing in several capacities—as the State Historian of Kentucky, as a professor with students, as a workshop teacher of secondary and elementary teachers, as an interested Kentuckian, and as a grandfather with grandchildren in the system. In virtually all of these, the KDL is a key element in taking the state to a new level. We all know that those who will succeed in the future are those who learn how to learn, so that they can adapt to the ever-present changes around them. Part of that learning involves research skills, part a sense of perspective regarding change. The new Kyleidoscope's themed collections and the wonderful materials already in the KDL enable Kentuckians everywhere to do research in ways never before available and from that research to see things in ways never seen before.

I have seen the excitement when students do original research themselves, search out information, and develop new theses as a result. In fact, I have had that same sense of wonderment in my own work. When I completed a previous book, I searched these collections for illustrations, and found some otherwise lost to researchers. Those added greatly to the end product—a text for students. Moreover, on my current project, I searched for materials online, once again finding things that might be lost to history, without those sources. They will greatly enrich my work.

But what I did, and what my students have done, is repeated over and over by others, and should occur even more in the future. Just think what is possible: Want an image from the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Want to read a transcript of an interview with a key leader? Want to search newspapers

Department of History

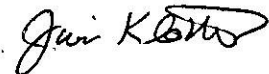
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concerning a person or place? Finding those, seeing them, reading them is exciting. All that can now be done. Numerous disciplines can benefit from all that, but, as a historian, I especially appreciate what that means. Original research is the lifeblood of history. Too often lazy teachers make it all dull and uninteresting, as they focus on facts and figures, dates and deaths. But when students immerse themselves in the materials from the time, then they understand about the people involved and the story they tell. Then history lives. Then people become better informed as citizens. Then we are better as a state.

To me, Kentucky must preserve those things that are our strengths, that make us special, while leaving behind those things that hinder us. The KDL and Kyleidoscope help make us stand out. I was looking at a web site that features numerous scholarly links, and there were two state sites listed. One was the KDL. It is a strength of the state and we must expand it and make it even better known across the commonwealth. The resources needed to do that must be applied. For if we fail there, we fail those of all ages, now and in the future.

Sincerely,



James C. Klotter

The State Historian of Kentucky  
and Professor of History