

## Planning under way for Civil War center

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A new history center at Western will bring to life a war that ended 140 years ago.

The Board of Regents unanimously approved the Center for the Study of the Civil War in the West at their July 22 meeting. The center will be the home of the largest Civil War microfilm collection in the country. Organizers said the center will spark discussion and conferences about the Civil War.

Plans for the center are still in development, history department head Richard Weigel said.

History Associate Professor Robert Dietle said the Civil War center doesn't have any space dedicated to it right now, but he hopes the center will have some offices in the future.

Faculty involved with the Civil War center will be assembling a committee of faculty and community members this fall to work in the center, Dietle said.

They also are looking for a Civil War historian to hire for an endowed professorship, he said.

The center will focus on the Civil War in the West because there are battle sites near Western, and there hasn't been as much research on the western front of the war, Weigel said.

Faculty involved with the center are planning a workshop for area school teachers for next summer, Dietle said. The first conference probably won't be until 2008.

This will give students a chance to meet scholars on the subject, Dietle said.

History Assistant Professor Andrew McMichael led the effort to purchase the microfilms from LexisNexis, which weren't originally included in the Civil War center. McMichael then approached Dietle about the microfilms.

"Then we realized the two matched up perfectly," McMichael said.

Space in the Kentucky Library has been allotted for the center's collection of Civil War microfilms, which cost \$300,000. Western acquired the films from LexisNexis in the spring. President Gary Ransdell arranged for the purchase of the microfilms, McMichael said.

The microfilms will include newspaper articles, pictures, wills, diaries and financial records, McMichael said.

"This microfilm collection will give them a chance to get a first-hand look at life in the South in the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s and 1900s as well," McMichael said.

McMichael said Harvard or Yale probably have the second-largest microfilm collection in the country, which is only about half the size of Western's.

Michael Trapasso, a professor of geography and geology who has an interest in the Civil War,

said it's good to have a specific place to do research.

Trapasso said it's also important to highlight the Western theater of the war.

"It's *our* Civil War history," he said.