This talk marks the start of my sixth year as University Librarian. For the last five years, I have used this annual opportunity to reflect on our accomplishments of the previous year and to project a set of directions and actions for us to take. That was relatively easy because the financial conditions of public research universities had been reasonably predictable and the near-term future was fairly easy to see. From our past experience, we knew that whenever state economies slowed, state support for our institutions slowed; but both inevitably bounced back to higher levels within a few years. During the down times we merely, had to wait while, as Guskin and Marcy wrote in a recent issue of Change', we “muddled through.”

This year, my talk will differ considerably from those of the past. We’ve had a hard year, and despite it we’ve made some notable accomplishments of which we should be justly proud. But, our future will not mirror our past. We can’t continue to “muddle through.” We can’t continue to pursue short-term reactionary strategies hoping for long-term financial rebounds that are now highly improbable, for in the end those strategies will undermine what we hope to accomplish. The imperative to change is stronger then ever.
Let me share a couple of pertinent facts with you. State support for the University is now less than 20% of its revenues. Twenty years ago, the State provided $8 for every $1 paid in tuition. Today, the State provides $1 for every $1.10 in tuition revenues. UIUC’s base tuition rate is $6500/year and in units with differential tuition, such as the College of Engineering, it’s as high as $8900/year. These are stunning figures. And the trend will continue. We’re not going to “bounce back.” And we can’t continue to “muddle through.”

If we don’t change some of the ways in which we operate, and if we don’t change our expectations about support from the University, we will not continue to be successful. The title of our 10 millionth volume, drawn from the inscription at the entrance to the Main Library, is particularly appropriate for my talk today: Unlocking Our Past, Building Our Future.

Despite some notable challenges, we had some notable successes this year. Focusing on unlocking the past by improving access to our collection, we continued to convert records for the online catalog, we launched the ORR – online research resources function – and created the Access Strategies Team. Our work with ILCSO’s Digital Library Products Committee should help us attain our goals of offering robust federated searching and link resolution, and our ground-breaking OAI work is both improving access to content nestled deep in the web and laying the foundation for our Institutional Repository initiative and our work on DLF’s Aquifer and other national and international initiatives.
Part of building our future rests on our ability to provide contents - printed and digital materials of all sorts - for today's and tomorrow's students and scholars. Despite the lack of new permanent financial resources, we had notable successes in this area. The contract with Elsevier that was negotiated by UIC, UIS, and UIUC collectively, and our agreement to maintain only one print copy of each title within the collective group, freed up some funds that were then used for other collection materials; the negotiated price increases were reasonable (as these things go) and they helped avoid some additional cancellations. Notable were two commitments from the University Administration that are enabling us to acquire backfiles of Elsevier titles (again, collectively with UIC and UIS) and the Archive of Americana. The Interim Chancellor has also committed some funds for us to demonstrate the value of expanding some electronic journals licensed by the UIC Health Sciences Library to the UIUC community. Our annual fund-raising program generated a record $457,000, much of which was contributed to specific departmental libraries where it helped augment our ability to acquire more collection materials.

Part of building our future rests on our ability to teach our users how to live and work successfully in an information-intensive age on their terms, not on ours. Our emerging information literacy program made notable progress by developing supporting programs and collaborating with Student Life, Campus Orientation, and other campus agencies to integrate information literacy instruction into their services. The increasing popularity of electronic reserves, a term that I'd like us to
abandon in favor of classroom support or assigned readings, led to increased demands that we met successfully by centralizing much of those operations.

Unlocking our past and building our future require us to be responsible stewards of our collections. Since its beginnings, the University has invested very heavily in the Library’s collections. Now valued at well in excess of $1.5 billion dollars, the value of the collections’ intellectual contents is priceless. Environments that contribute to the demise of the media on which the contents are stored, and cavalier or indifferent attitudes about the importance of preserving our great collections, are inappropriate and unacceptable. Our fairly new preservation program has made exceptional progress towards establishing a comprehensive set of activities to ensure that the treasures that represent our past are available in the future. But, we have only scratched the surface of what we need to do if we are to be successful, particularly with regard to content stored on new media, which appear to deteriorate at rates far in excess of that experienced by paper. Neglect will not be benign and we can’t let it happen.

Construction on the Oak Street Facility, which in addition to its value in alleviating the severe overcrowding evidenced in most units is an important piece of our preservation program, finally got underway this year, and is nearly completed. We pulled together, sometimes enthusiastically and sometimes not, from all parts of the Library to provide the staff resources necessary to select and process the
materials. I know many of you thought you would never see it happen, but happen it will and we will celebrate appropriately.

We garnered many grants and awards this past year, notice of which have been sent to you previously. It’s an impressive list that represents our ability to raise external funding for some of the things we want to do. And we continue to play a very important national and international role in our capacity to develop and apply new technologies to solve problems important to increasing access and use of digital content. Reconceptualization of DIMTI to become the Digital Services Development unit and creation of the Digital Content Creation Team are two critical steps toward our success in creating a digital environment in which our users can operate well today and tomorrow.

Improving our infrastructure is an important feature of our new strategic plan, which is nearing completion. We made significant progress this year in addressing the conditions of our physical facilities, although our needs seem endless. Our decision to devote an entire position to facilities, which we had not done previously, clearly was right. During her interim role, Sharon Hershbarger brought new energy and improvements to the conditions of our facilities. And Jeff Schrader has continued to expand on the foundation Sharon laid for us. After several near-disasters caused by falling plaster in the Main Library, which caught the attention of our local legislators and campus administrators, the University finally made a firm commitment to repair part of the roof, replace downspouts and
gutters, and install fire suppression systems in the Main Bookstacks and the Undergraduate Library. Perhaps once they're installed I can get a good night's sleep again!

We also made facilities improvements in the Asian and Women and Gender Resources Libraries and the planning stage of the Noyes Lab renovation is nearly complete; the project will see the Chemistry Library move to a more prominent position in the building and offer, for the first time, a facility that's on one floor - and designed for 21st-century users. Regrettably, our desire to move a reconceptualized BEL to the planned new Business School building doesn't appear to have much traction with the building’s planners.

This past year saw a renewal and increase in the strength of our campus collaborations. We held several retreats with CITES staff that have resulted in an action agenda that will improve services to students and faculty. Our strengthened collaboration with GSLIS has resulted in two major grant awards: one, which includes counterparts at Indiana University, will result in the development of new research-based degree programs to educate librarians for work in digital libraries, and one with a large number of other partners that will help address large critical issues in digital preservation. Our collaboration with CITES, GSLIS, and LAS have resulted in a strong commitment from then-Provost Herman that enables us to develop an institutional repository capacity on campus, which is a major building block of our future.
We also strengthened our state, regional, national, and international collaborations. We’re involved in the leadership effort to merge three Illinois academic library consortia and we continue to have representation on the boards of all three of those organizations. We have a set of budding collaborative relationships with the Indiana University Library that should yield a ripe crop of new and expanded services and resources for our users. The CIC’s Center for Library Initiatives was reinvigorated this year and we’re part of a collaboration there to examine the implications of sharing print journals that are also available to us electronically. Together with its partner the Illinois State Library, the Mortenson Center participated in a successful grant application to IMLS that will break new ground in training for international librarianship, and the Mortenson Center itself broke new ground when it was awarded a Carnegie grant for Barbara Ford and Susan Schnuer to travel to five African countries, from which new relationships will emerge. It’s clear that these collaborations mark only the beginning of new ways of working with campus and external communities. We have successful models - most especially those forged between departmental libraries and the constituencies they serve - from which to springboard into new and important arenas in which to fulfill our mission.

Because it is absolutely clear that monies from the State and tuition are insufficient to fund the Library at levels that will sustain our greatness, we continued to work very hard to achieve the goals of the campus campaign for the
Library. We received several large gifts and have raised more than $845,000 towards our $1.4 million Mellon match goal. We’ve surpassed the $11 million mark in the campaign, but it will continue to take a lot of time and hard work to reach our $30 million goal.

Reduced budget funds, increasing demands and expectations, new obligations and opportunities, and continuing material price pressures contributed to this year of budgetary challenges. Instead of laying off permanent staff, we dealt with last year’s budget cut by reducing funds available for Graduate Assistants and student workers and eliminating positions that became vacant. As a result, we reduced service hours and some services, and created considerable stresses and strains for the staff that remained. Divisions pulled together to provide emergency coverage and to distribute some collection funds. But all of this was designed to “muddle through” until better times appear. They won’t. And we can’t continue to use strategies that whittle away around our edges and eat at our core.

And so today I am here to affirm the greatness of our Library. It is great not because of the numbers of people who work in the Library but because of the uncommon quality you all have. It is great not because the statistical data rank the size of our collections so highly but because of the uncommon strength of those collections. It is great not because we support teaching, learning, and research but because we are an essential and integral part of teaching, learning, and research on this campus and around the world.
This Library has succeeded in the past not because it stood firm in its traditions but because it has continuously met new demands and expectations through changes in its traditional ways of operating while holding firm to its traditional values. Now the new demands and expectations are coming faster and more furiously than ever before, and just as we can’t muddle through financially, hoping that the budget will reach levels that are truly unattainable, we can’t muddle through by clinging to traditions and modes of operating that no longer make sense. We must cherish and retain the best of what we’ve been, translating and adding to it what we need to be in the future. We’ve made a decent start, but we have much more work to do. More work to do to meet the needs of our students and faculty. And more work to do to deliver content and services in new ways that take advantage of technologies our students and faculty now use – instant messaging, blogging, Spyking, wifi and more – and in ways that apply new technologies to traditional content and services—access to the deep web, browsing content virtually, federating searching and link resolution, and more. I am not calling for us to throw out traditions, but I am calling for us to think about how to change access to traditional services and content in ways that meet the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students and faculty. And to think about how to change the ways in which we do our work.

Just as the political pundits like to divide our country into Red States and Blue States, some of us tend to think of our “constituents” very narrowly, often
defined by the discipline to which our unit or library is directed. We know, intellectually, that all disciplines are interdisciplinary, yet we seem unable to think about the entirety of our user population.

I think it’s healthy to advocate for a particular group of users. And I think that some tension among those who advocate for those groups also is healthy. But we do too much squabbling and there’s too much tension. I think it’s unhealthy not to recognize that all our users are all of our users. It’s unhealthy not to recognize that all undergraduates can’t and don’t rely on the Undergraduate Library alone or that information literacy efforts are core, not a frill. At this time of campus emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and cross-campus initiatives there’s too much divisiveness between and among disciplinary groups in the Library.

It’s unhealthy not to recognize that users are not best served by the finger-pointing and blaming that goes on between traditional public service units and traditional technical service units. That they are not well served by those who cling to offering a piece of a routine common core service when that service is provided in a high-quality way on a large scale by another unit. It’s unhealthy not to recognize that no one is well served by those who complain about not having sufficient resources, who say that they want things to change, but who won’t only not help effect change, they stand in its way. Neither is anyone well served by those who are so eager for change that they overlook the value and values of
tradition and the costs of change on others. Attitudes must change if we are to regain our health.

We are one Library - with a capital L - and if we are to continue to be one of the world's great libraries, we have to do things differently. We have to reduce the level of our squabbles and maintain the values and the best of our traditions while embracing the realities of the 21st century.

We’ve made a little progress in looking at ourselves and our future differently. Just before the start of this semester, we launched three new teams: CAMELS, which helps with cyclically-predictable activities and provides last-resort short-term emergency coverage for public service units; Access Strategies; and Digital Content Creation. Another set of teams designed to improve services in the two science divisions are being formed currently. We have also expanded the role of the Head of IRRC to Head of Informational Delivery Services and Entrepreneurial Programs to bring oversight to our current revenue-generating activities and to develop new revenue-generating services.

In response to emerging needs and to curtailed resources, and recognizing the value of our departmental library structure, whose value I reaffirmed strongly in last year's talk as well as in other venues, we have developed some new and interesting service models. One is our Biotechnology Librarian, who is a subject librarian without a library. Her value to her primary users was reaffirmed in a recent conversation I had with the director of the Institute for Genomic Biology,
whose building will rise soon from the cavernous hole on Gregory Drive and whose faculty so value her services that they’re willing to give up space to make sure she’s in their building. Another is a change in the way in which very small libraries are managed and their services delivered. The Grainger Engineering Library is now responsible for all aspects of the Physics Library, and the BEL (Business and Economics Library) is responsible for the Labor and Industrial Relations Library. Each is being operated somewhat differently, giving us an excellent opportunity to compare their efficacies. But we still have too many service points, so many locations as to be extraordinarily confusing for our users: we have insufficient spaces for teaching and for commonly demanded services; we have insufficient models for delivering contents and services in new ways and locations; we’re far behind the curve in developing a cohesive digital library program; and we spend too much money to operate all those service points, money that could be used for collections and unique services.

Here are some issues that we must take on in the next 1-3 years if we’re going to move past “muddling through” to create transformed and transformative services and collections. This is not an all-inclusive list. I invite you to add to it.

1. We must stop clinging to all of those service points we provide, especially in the Main Library. Whether we’re able to do some facility reconfiguration or not, we must find ways to offer our services at fewer locations with fewer staff. Our patrons are
increasingly frustrated, our staff are increasingly stressed by high demands and bored by routine work, and it’s just too expensive.

2. We must examine and implement new models of service and content delivery. This includes resolving issues about when to keep print versions of certain electronic content and developing new ways to serve patrons where and how they need to be served. And it includes defining the balance between commonly held core materials and rarely held or unique content that helps make us ‘special.’ We must also look at the nature, number, and mode of departmental libraries, retaining their traditional value and values but reconfiguring them to be as effective in the 21st century as they were in the 20th.

3. Well before I arrived here, the Library had plans to develop an Information Arcade in the Undergraduate Library. It didn’t happen. But now I can see compelling reasons to think about different models for offering large-scale services to undergraduates (perhaps modeled after the Information Commons emerging at our peer institutions, perhaps not) and more personalized services to graduate students and faculty in a more mass-customized mode, perhaps through conceptualizing classroom support services and research services in ways that differ dramatically from the siloed reference services we offer today.
4. I’ve already talked about the imperative to preserve our collections. In addition to investing more heavily in improving our environments and in rescuing contents delivered on media that are in danger of near-immediate destruction, we must invest financially and intellectually in our nascent institutional repository (a phrase I hope we can replace with something less evocative of an asylum); because we’re ahead of the curve here, we have the opportunity to think deeply about what the capacity can mean for UIUC for generations to come.

5. We must continue to work with other campus units and initiatives. We must continuously put ourselves in the shoes of our users. So, for example, we must integrate assigned digital readings into the course management system whenever possible to make accessing those materials less confusing and more convenient. Other opportunities for us to improve our services include working with the campus portal, the learning management system, first year studies, computing in the humanities, cross-campus initiatives… I could go on and on. No longer can we think of what we offer as a separate silo within the University. If we do, we will be ensiled and marginalized. We must take advantage of - and help to build and shape - these new integrated and integral campus services.
6. Just as our many locations are confusing to our users, so are our many websites. Our looks and feels are, for the most part, old-fashioned, mystifying, and off-putting. We must modernize our web entry points and keep them up-to-date with our users’ needs and expectations.

7. As part of the Digital Library Federation’s Aquifer initiative, we have an opportunity to work collaboratively to help build the new distributed online digital library with features that will allow users to find what they want and bring it to and use it in their own environments. Simple concept, hard to achieve. We have a lot to contribute on the technical side, but we are weak in our offerings of locally digitized content. We must develop and implement strategies for digitizing content, both on a project level and on a mass basis, and we must envision and build a cohesive digital library post haste.

8. The CAMELS team serves as a model for the way in which we must organize our work in the future. We must create ways for staff to come together to work collaboratively and flexibly; we must offer staff opportunities to reduce the time they spend on routine tasks in fixed locations; and we must offer opportunities to staff to learn, grow and promote into higher classified positions.

9. With a few exceptions, our facilities need vast improvements:
facilities for users, facilities for staff, and facilities for our
collections. Interim Chancellor Herman is providing funds for a state-of-the-art classroom in the Undergraduate Library. He is also providing funds for pre-planning for renovating the Main Library. But, even if we’re successful in convincing the right people that the planning effort should move forward with State funding it will be many years before the work is carried out. Meanwhile, we must continue to invest in improving our current spaces and in raising funds to build two new facilities: one that consolidates Ricker and City Planning and Landscape Architecture and another that the libraries in the Special Collections Division will occupy.

10. It is imperative that we reach our $30 million campaign goal quickly and that we continue to raise funds through private giving and revenue-generating activities. Although the major responsibility for private fund-raising rests on my shoulders and those of our Development Office personnel, it is not solely our responsibility. Every time you interact with a patron, every phone call or email or letter you answer presents us with the opportunity to build positive - or negative - relationships. Each one of us is responsible in a variety of ways for the success of our fund-raising efforts. Increasing grant support also remains an important part of our strategy to accomplish some of what we want to do but can’t afford without external
support. And increasing revenue-generating services that improve access for our users and extend access to some content and expertise to people to whom they are not now accessible is an equally important strategy to bring us more money.

11. How do we know how well we’re doing? The graduate student survey we undertook this year was the first step in finding out. But it’s only one piece of a set of new outcome measures we must develop and implement. Yes, we still have to count volumes and items cataloged, but no longer are circulation data and questions answered during reference ‘sweeps weeks’ adequate measures of what we do, of what we provide access to, or the quality of our work. Even though it takes some time to collect and record the data we need, the eventual improvements in service that they support well outweigh the cost.

If we are to be transformed and transformative, if we are to succeed in remaining one of the world’s great libraries in the 21st century, then we cannot keep “muddling through”. We must find ways to hold on to our values while changing the ways in which we work, in what and how we offer meaningful and flexible growth work environments, in how we work within and outside of the University. I invite you to join discussions about how we achieve these transformations through established avenues - the Collection Development Committee, the Executive Committee, faculty meetings, and the wide array of committees we currently
support as well as through continued discussions in your divisions or by contacting me directly.

I hope you feel the same urgency that I do. We can’t conduct business as usual. To build our future we must be bold and decisive and wise or we shall find ourselves on the margins of the University instead of an integral part of its fabric.

Thank you very much.

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