Good morning.

I don’t think many of you will question that this really is a time of transformation in higher education and that we academic research librarians are right in the thick of it. When he finished his interim term as University Librarian at the University of British Columbia, historian Peter Ward shared this non-librarian's view of his experience:

> It appears that the early 21st century library is a study in intense change over telescoped time. I’ve been a privileged participant-witness to one of the great shaping moments of the modern research university, seen from the vantage point of the centre – the nodal point in the information distribution system.

This point was also made in CLIR's recent report *No Brief Candle*: “This is not a passing phase in higher education. It is a transformational period that requires innovation and risk.”

So, yes, this is a great shaping moment, a time for innovation and risk, although it doesn’t always feel as if we have much control over that shaping. This morning I’m going to talk about opportunities that lurk within these times of financial crisis. And I’m going to be so bold as to use one of our initiatives Illinois as a case study.

Here's my central message: it is critically important for us to have solidly based strategies and to make good and careful yet bold choices during these times so that we can cope with our financial realities, do some things we might not otherwise have the political gravitas to do, and position our libraries for the coming decades. Let's be realistic. The financial situation won't ease for quite some time. We state-supported universities may not see our financial fortunes rebound for even longer. However, the context of financial pressures can bring some cover to our work, providing some easily understood rationale. But, financial pressures alone are insufficient to provide the basis for bold yet sound strategies. We must focus on providing what our users expect and demand, which includes offering traditional and emerging services in affordable ways. It also requires us to do many things differently and to stop doing some things altogether. While admirable, our librarian penchant for doing things perfectly isn’t a proven strategy for success in transformative times.
Will academic libraries go the way of newspapers? Or will we emerge as vibrant, ‘transformed,’ organizations?

I’ve had the privilege to be a participant-witness for a little longer than Peter Ward. This August I celebrated my 40th anniversary in the profession. And I’ve seen many changes, some minor and some transformative. With the rapidity of changes we’re seeing today, with the unrelenting expectations and demands from our users not only to have access to content any time and from any where but to deliver content and services in all the places they work and play and tweet, I have no doubt that this is a time for us to be bold in effecting fundamental transformation in what we do and how we do it.

When I think of transformation I think about the willingness to abandon past successes to pursue something new and more exciting. I think about Miles Davis who, when he wrote *Kind of Blue*, was willing to disappoint his most loyal fans by breaking dramatically from his old successful style to seize the opportunity to make a bold leap from the bebop tradition to a new kind of music now called modal jazz.

We’ve seized these transformative opportunities, too. Sometimes our visions and efforts are successful, or mostly successful, such as the development of OCLC. Sometimes they’re not. Some of you will remember the community’s efforts in the 1970s to create the National Periodicals Library, which was never realized.

Failure is part of the process of transformation in all sectors. Here’s a picture of Ford’s 1958 concept of the car of the future – the Nucleon (point out the reactor).
So, what makes these times different and ripe for transformation?

- Global financial crisis that is effecting public and private universities alike, but with each offering a different response
- Digital content and digitally-based services have become widespread if not yet ubiquitous in all disciplines; the pending Google settlement, if approved will accelerate these trends significantly
  - We’re on the cusp of developing strategies for archiving digital content and re-envisioning the need for the widespread replication of common print content
- Many users no longer start their searches from the library. And most of them often don’t even know that they’re in the library when they’re in our virtual space
  - This intensifies the need for us to offer discovery, retrieval, and other robust tools for analyzing and using information
  - This clearly intensifies the need for user instruction in what we’ve been calling “information literacy” or “information fluency” as well as the need for self-used guides, pathfinders, and tutorials
  - And highlights the need for subject expertise, which is growing, not diminishing
- Our users are more diverse in their needs and their demands. Drawing disciplinary boundaries, as many research libraries did when they created department or branch libraries, no longer serves a growing number of our users.
- E-Scholarship is beginning to create demands for different types of expertise and different sorts of services than we have offered traditionally. I continue to be amazed at the speed with which our faculty are asking us for help in curating their databases, large and small and I continue to be disappointed that we can’t meet all, or even a large percentage, of these needs
- Our campus partners have expanded both in number and in type; it is no longer sufficient to partner with faculty groups, centers, institutes, and traditional
services, such as writing help program. We must now partner with groups from health services to career services to physical plant and campus rec if we want to be successful.

- What we used to brag about - number of branches, number of volumes - may now be more of a liability than an asset – or not. Bigger is no longer necessarily better. In fact, as I see it, bigger definitely is no longer better. Those of us with huge print collections often feel as if managing these often replicative resources is much more a burden than a blessing.

Slide 5

There’s no doubt that we’re in a time of transformation. To transform in a sustainable way, like this tree, we must have solid roots and good pruning. But what we each do, how we prune and water our trees, the strategies we take, the choices we make, will depend on many factors, including:

- Our university’s leadership
- Our university’s culture
- Opportunities available with other organizations on campus (I3, McKinley, NCSA)
- Opportunities available through consortia, partnerships, and other groups or individuals outside of our campus
- The interest and support of the provost and other university administrators
- One’s relationship with the deans, department heads, and other academic leaders, each of whom is trying to develop his or her own strategies
Most of us have been making changes for years, although we don't often realize the extent of these changes until we step back and look at, say, a decade of changes. But most of those changes were low-hanging fruit and now seem simple in comparison to what lies ahead. At Illinois we’re climbing that ladder on the right and I more often than not feel as if I’m trying to balance on one foot while stretching to pluck that opportunity near the top. I sure hope my arms are long enough! So, let me tell you what we’re up to at Illinois in a very cursory way.

What we call our New Service Model process began fall 2007, but some changes made in the early 2000s predated (Bevier and ACES; Biotech Librarian; Browsing Room, Women & Gender Resources). Before this started, we had close to 40 departmental libraries, a model developed in the first half of the 20th century; many were very small and most had been developed to serve specific bounded disciplines and were situated in buildings that housed departments that comprised those disciplines – or in buildings that once housed those departments, many of which had moved to new quarters. We also feature departmental libraries, such as English, Business & Economics, and others, in our Main Library Building. Our Library is anchored by our Main Library, which holds close to 6 million volumes, and large libraries serving undergraduates, engineering, and the agricultural, consumer, and environmental sciences. With the growth of interdisciplinary scholarship, these narrowly focused libraries were becoming less important to the work of our campus community, and their proliferation meant we confused and inconvenienced our users while spending precious resources to support replicative functions.

We started from premise, which was reinforced by the University community throughout the process, that what is really important is expertise and collections and content.

I think it’s important to stress that I didn’t start the process with specific outcomes in mind. Well, ok, I knew from what our users had been telling us in the annual user surveys we’d done for years and in other venues that our many service points were confusing and inconvenient and that no longer would one or even two of our libraries
suffice as they had in the past in supporting scholarship in many disciplines. And, I knew from observation and from statistical measures that physical use of space to access collections had diminished (but that overall use of monographic literature hadn’t diminished but rather that more and more of it was being delivered to faculty and grad students’ offices), and I knew that we couldn’t afford to sustain the replicative services found in most of our department libraries. What I didn’t know was the nature or any specific details of the new service models we would create. It was essential for us to listen to the University community before shaping our new models.

Slide 8

The changes that have been proposed and implemented to date as part of this process are rooted in the Library’s ongoing commitment to core values of service to teaching, scholarship, and cultural heritage and to our tradition of excellence in services and collections. I believe that academic libraries of this century will be distinguished by the scope and quality of their service programs as much as by their special collections and other content. As I noted a little while ago, those large, rich, wonderful print-based collections as we keep them today are diminishing in value and absorbing ever larger amounts of our resources to maintain many multiple copies of materials that are increasingly available and preferred by our users in digital formats. I don’t mean to suggest that there isn’t enormous value in those collections, but rather that we need to turn from being focused on the size of our collections as an asset to developing new models that provide access at costs we can afford and the services – old and new – that our users are demanding.

As the HathiTrust becomes larger and larger, it will provide us with the basis for making nationally-based decisions about how many copies of now-commonly-held print content needs to be held, where it needs to be held, and in what kinds of repositories it needs to be held.

To meet the numerous challenges of designing a library for the next generation, we must embrace changes in our organization and methods of conducting our work.

Slide 9

All of our changes are also rooted in a set of core commitments to library service:
Assign subject specialists responsibilities for providing library services, collections, information resources, and information products in defined fields of teaching, learning, research, and service activities

Acquire and provide access to rich collections of published scholarship, primary source research materials and related resources

Foster regular communication and collaboration between faculty, students, and library professionals and staff

Make use of the full array of library facilities so as to provide appropriate physical environments both for users and the long-term preservation of the cultural and scholarly records for which we serve as stewards.

Slide 10

So, we began the process by asking our own library faculty and staff for their ideas for change. We received more than 70 – some big, some little; some thoughtful and innovative; some incremental; one that was downright mean-spirited. We then posted these ideas and invited feedback. And we got lots, both from our own folks as well as from other faculty on and off campus. Everything was done in the open. One small department – Classics – conducted a worldwide petition campaign against a proposal that was pretty well ill-founded – and that deficiency was obvious to anyone who saw it. The Classicists carried on nonetheless and thought they had achieved a major victory when we agreed that the proposed change was not a good one.

We honed the proposals down to about two dozen, posted them on a website that included an online suggestion box. And we held a series of open meetings as well as smaller meetings with groups we identified or with individuals and groups that asked us to meet with them. I received several hundreds of emails and letters, many of which contained the same worded text. The Chancellor received a small number of letters and email messages and the Provost received even fewer. But, this happens every time we propose a change, especially when the person in charge of the unit doesn’t embrace it but chooses instead to inform his/her constituency of the idiocy of what Library Administration proposes. In one major instance, some people who protested later took the time to apologize after they realized that the proposal hadn’t been well represented to them. I’d be very surprised if you haven’t had the same experiences here. But no matter the number or timing of this input, I read and considered every one, and so did
my team. We also all tried hard to listen to what was said in group and individual meetings. Our ideas were altered – sometime a little, sometimes considerably – by this input.

New service models include embedding librarians and sometimes staff, near academic faculty and students; creating service spaces in new academic buildings as the School of Social Work did, and creating robust virtual libraries or portals.

Iconically important physical spaces have, in at least one instance, become iconically important virtual spaces. We produced a report that synthesized our work and recommended actions, and we began implementing recommendations: To date: closed LIR, moved CPLA to ACES, Physics to Engineering, LIS for I3, made significant improvements to security and services in our central stacks and circulation services, and recentralized Tech Services, which had been scattered throughout the system in the mid-1980s as part of Hugh Atkinson’s transformational changes; sometimes grand ideas – remember Hugh’s holistic librarians? – don’t work out as well as intended or don’t stand up well as times change.

Slide 11

So, we were moving ahead at a pace that accommodated lots of discussion with the campus when on Jan. 15, I received a “Dear Paula” letter from the Provost, praising our effort but telling me to move more quickly and more aggressively because of budget
pressures, with a report due to her on April 30. Her letter focused on three broad areas: opportunities for change in the provision of library services to the physical sciences and engineering; to the life sciences; and within the Main Library. And, she put forward specific ideas, ideas that hadn’t arisen previously and ideas she had never shared with me before.

This request was not without controversy, but it actually proved to be very helpful in a couple of ways: first, it confirmed the importance of what we were doing; second, it provided ‘cover’ for us to look at some ideas that hadn’t surfaced in our initial call for ideas; and third, it turned the focus of faculty and grad students who weren’t happy with the proposed changes, or in fact with the idea of any change, away from Library Administration to University Administration.

Slide 12

What have we done as a result of this accelerated planning? Integrating Physics and Geology to Grainger will allow us to establish a robust hub for physical and virtual library services in the physical sciences and engineering disciplines. Reduces two small departmental libraries. Physics
is now part of Engineering and a team was charged two weeks ago to work out the specifics of consolidating the Geology Library into Engineering too.

We’re exploring a new model for the Biology Library. At first, the solution seemed to be clear: consolidate it into our large ACES Library – that’s Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences – into which we moved our City Planning and Landscape Architecture Library a year ago. But then, a group of biology faculty asked if part of the collection could be moved to the Chemistry Library. This began a dialog that’s now being carried out more formally by a team from the Library and various Life Science departments. I expect the team’s report and recommendations by the end of this semester.

Explore new model for AHS and the health sciences. AHS is a combination of social, behavioral and health sciences. A new team of faculty from the Library and various health science departments – we don’t have a medical school but we do have a regional campus of the UIC medical college; and just to make things even more complicated, there’s a health sciences library on campus that’s part of UIC’s library – not ours. The team will explore realignment of services to the social and behavioral sciences as well as various applied health science programs that are served by ACES, Vet Med, AHS and the HSL. Mary Case, my colleague at UI Chicago, and I continue to explore new ways in which to offer more integrated services and resources for our overlapping communities; but the story of our seriously increasing collaboration is for another time.

We’ve also consolidated Gov Docs and Central Ref – long overdue; we’re consolidating the international and area studies specialists in a central location; and centralizing some activities, such as print reserves, within Central Access Services. We’ll also be taking looking at how to best support the study of literature and literary analysis; how to support the social and behavioral sciences (much of which is already consolidated); and how to improve the use of our Main stacks. This is just the 1st cut – there’s much more to look at. Our main goal is to use our resources more effectively to provide subject specialists, collections and content, and robust services in ways that are more convenient and accessible to our users.

Slide 13

And now that we’re climbing towards the top of that rickety ladder, I can’t tell you that this has been easy, or that I’m unscarred. There is resistance:

From some Library Faculty: No, no a thousand times no. Over my dead body
Change is good; I’m no luddite. After all, I won a technology award 25 years ago. But the only change I’ll support is the one that implements my vision.

From some humanities faculty: I MUST browse everything, always, and forever, just as I do now (even though our current system makes that impossible because collections are split among departmental libraries, our main book stacks, our rare book and manuscript library, and our storage facilities.)

OK, but we have to keep the ‘brand’ identity of my library even when the library is closed.

You MUST not close my library because….where will my students study?

But there is also a lot of support, particularly from the Deans: Labor, GSLIS, LAS, Engineering, ACES, Business, FAA, Vet Med, even AHS. These deans, and others, have been instrumental in helping make our case. Our provost (who’s now at UCD), the interim provost, and our associate provost for international programs have been wonderfully supportive too. I think it’s important to note that I’ve had numerous conversation with these folks individually and in groups, with the faculty senate leadership, and of course have worked closely with the SCL and my other advisory groups.

Library faculty and staff – many supportive, some enthusiastic, some just want to know where they’ll be

MOST IMPORTANTLY, everyone understands the financial pressures; some of the resistance from previous conversations has just melted away in the face of economic realities. It is, indeed, time to seize the day and move boldly forward.

Slide 14

Are there discernable differences in the reactions and responses from different disciplines? We found that
Most, but not all, scientists embrace or accept the proposed changes. This is probably a reflection of their reliance on digital content and the strong ways in which our science librarians are integrated into the work of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary groups they serve, including our Biotech librarian, who’s never had to run or even work in a physical library.

We made many changes in our services to mainstream social sciences as well as to several social science-based professional programs years ago; for the most part they’re happy with new models, even those made recently.

Humanists seem to be split. Some generational differences. Some disciplinary differences. Some differences caused by library faculty advocacy.

Some evidence of greater acceptance related to greater e-content.

Much evidence through years of surveys, that our students are confused and frustrated by our system and they want more predictability of hours and service and fewer libraries to sort out. They also want long study hours and they voted with their dollars to support that.

Many of our subject specialists who used to manage small libraries are grateful both not to have to supervise staff and for the time that’s been freed up to work more closely with their constituencies.

Several major themes have arisen consistently throughout all the stages of our work:

Iconic symbolism – Women; Labor
Now virtual iconic symbolism

Brand Identity – Title VI and Title VIII proposals

Study space – a campus issue?

Content

Specialists

Slide 16

As if this undertaking wasn’t enough, I was fortunate enough to talk my former boss into doing something to renew our crumbling Main Library building for the 21st century and to consider its long-term use in conjunction with our Undergrad Library, which is situated nearby on the same east-west axis. She funded a $1 million conceptual study that looks as if it will be acted on by the University.

The proposal, which includes demolishing our stack core, is quite radical – explain if there’s time. And even though most of the faculty who attended our open presentation understood and supported the concepts, at least one not only didn’t – she threw a verbal tantrum.

Slide 17

So, as I conclude my remarks, let me try to summarize why it’s important for us to seize this moment in time. I am very proud that we began to look at how to improve the ways in which we deliver our services and use our financial resources prior to the swift
emergence of our current economic climate. We had time to plan our approach, to communicate with the campus in advance of our work, and to engage with campus communities. Library services and collections remain critically important to the campus – we heard and continue to hear that repeatedly. But, the campus needs us to deliver new services, such as data curation, with no or few new resources and we need to act.

Some final observations on our work:

- Opportunities to provide enhanced access, service, and communication
- Willingness of so many to engage in discussion with open minds and broad perspectives
- Courage of many deans and department heads to challenge thinking of their faculty
- Courage of my leadership team and many other Library faculty and staff
- Support of Provost critical

Most important of all, I think, has been our starting place – we knew we could do better but we came to the table without fixed ideas – and our willingness to engage in discussion, to listen carefully, and to reflect the essence of what we heard in our outcomes. Our challenge will be to continue this effort beyond its official end date – next summer – to be sure that we continue to seize opportunities.

Slide 18

Well, which of these will I end up looking like? At times I feel like the old woman on the right.
But, I am convinced that it is in these times of change and pressures on resources that we must seize the opportunities we see ahead of us. I am also convinced that at the end of the day, I will stand tall (well, as tall as I can) like the woman on the left.

Thanks for your attention. And....carpe diem!