Thank you for joining me once again for my annual “State of the Library” talk. It’s really wonderful to see so many of you here to help me mark the start of my 10th year at Illinois.

The first thing I must do—and that I ask each of you to do—is acknowledge you and all your efforts to uphold the University Library as the very best in supporting the needs of our users of today and tomorrow and to maintain its place as one of the world’s great libraries. This is our ultimate shared vision. We must recognize and acknowledge the changes that have and that will continue to influence higher education and our university, and we must prepare ourselves to continue to use our resources effectively and efficiently to provide the very best collections and service programs to our faculty and students as well as to the many people around the state and around the world who access our content and services. You have been through a lot this year, some of it real and some of it imagined; some of it exciting and some of it stressful. Some of you have taken on important roles of leading us to positive changes. Most of you have embraced—or accepted—the changes we’ve made and the changes we’re planning.
You are what make this great library so great! Let’s take a minute to applaud ourselves and to applaud each other.

Some of you have joined us since I spoke with you last September; please stand and introduce yourself by name and the unit in which you work. Welcome to all of you! You join a group of talented and dedicated people at an exceptional time in the Library’s history. We’re very glad you’re with us.

I know that individually, each one of you does your very best. But this does not always result in an aggregated best. We must look at the totality of what we do and how we do it, for we have many daunting challenges ahead of us, challenges we cannot meet if we don’t think broadly and creatively and if we don’t act together. We must remember, you must remember, that it’s not “all about me,” but rather it’s “all about us.” I’m not suggesting that we be guided by that last-decade mantra to “do more with less,” but rather that we do more better—that is, that we do the very best we can do collectively while recognizing that bigger is no longer better and that territorialism or clinging to the past will keep us from doing our collective best and realizing our vision.
I have seen enormous changes over the nearly four decades in which I’ve been a librarian. However, I have not experienced the type, complexity, speed, and imperative of the changes I’m now seeing in society in general, in higher education, in individual universities, and here at Illinois. Global collaboration and competition for improving quality of life are changing the ways in which the public thinks about higher education. And there is ample evidence that the issues that higher education faces are not temporary. The calls for accountability are growing louder while public support for higher education as a societal good is on the decline. We may very well be at one of those watershed moments—those moments of transformation in higher education such as those brought about by the Morrill Act, the rise of graduate schools and disciplinary-focused departments, the G.I. Bill, and the influx of huge amounts of Federal research funds that fundamentally changed the role and nature of higher education. The current transformation is marked by a growing gap between private and public universities that threatens to do more than just entice the very best faculty and students to join private institutions. As the provosts of the CIC’s public universities wrote to
Business Week this year in response to its previous cover story, in a letter headlined “Educational Excellence Without Ivy:”

‘The Dangerous Wealth of the Ivy League’ reports that leaders in higher education talk about a race for survival among universities. But what’s imperiled goes beyond the public research universities themselves. The relative impoverishment of these schools threatens to upset a public-private balance that is at the core of America’s status as the world leader in higher education and academic-based research. That balance underwrites our ability to meet global competition with social, scientific, and economic leadership. (Business Week, January 3, 2008)

These transformative factors are reflected in Provost Linda Katehi’s annual budget letter sent to me this summer. She wrote, “As a campus, we anticipate a challenging financial context for the next two years and it will be important for the Library to be positioned to address these challenges and, in partnership with other units, to take advantage of the opportunities created by this context and to optimally manage challenges.” I will return to the Provost’s letter in just a little while when I turn to the specific challenges I see ahead of us.
I wrote much of this talk while listening to Nigel Kennedy and the Kroke Band’s CD *East Meets West*. (And, yes, there’s much meaning you can draw about our current situation from the title.) There are two very distinctive tracks. “Kukush” presents a memorable rhythm distinctive to the Balkans. But, in the end it disappoints. It is repetitive and it fizzles out too soon. “Eden” features a wonderful haunting melody played in differing tempos, a melody that is both familiar and new, a piece that reels penultimately at a tempo approaching that of a tarantella only to slow and end on a beautiful single note played on a lone string, a note that has different meaning to different listeners. As we look ahead to the future, we face a critical choice. Now that we have begun to meet some—and only some—of the challenges of the early 21st century do we sputter and stop after achieving only a small piece of what we can become, as does “Kukush,” or do we take the core of the unforgettable services and content we provide and, like “Eden” create variations and tempos that will allow us to venture into notes we had not played previously? Do we leave a memorable rhythm or a memorable melody? Do we provide common rhythms or that beautiful personal note?
Over the next few minutes I’ll focus on some, and only some, of the highlights of the past year, but only to set the stage for articulating the many challenges we have in front of us if we are to realize our vision. Meeting these challenges successfully is critical to continuing the heritage of this great library. Our excellent collections, content, and service programs provided by the very best experts are at risk if we fail. The importance of our library in helping the University recruit and retain the very best faculty and students—keys to attaining its vision of pre-eminence—is at risk if we fail. The stakes are high and we must be bold, aggressive, and entrepreneurial in developing and implementing strategic and operational plans if we are to succeed.

Last year I offered some ideas about the University’s future directions and the opportunities and threats they present to the Library. Although we didn’t talk much about them explicitly in the past year, we did, in fact, make some progress in seizing opportunities to build stronger partnerships in teaching, learning, and research. I will circle back to them in a little while, but I cannot go further without focusing on our New Service Model activities.
In case you have forgotten, or were not with us during this process, here is how we articulated the New Service Model challenge:

Over the past several years, the service and collection models that defined excellence in academic libraries throughout the 20th century have been challenged by new models of scholarly communication, new mechanisms for licensing and accessing digital content, the introduction of transformative technologies like the World Wide Web, new methods for teaching and learning, new approaches to interdisciplinary scholarship and scientific inquiry, the arrival of a new generation of faculty and students who, as "digital natives," bring new approaches to information use (and higher expectations for access to digital services and content), and broad changes in the higher education environment.

As the University Library works to meet the challenge set by the Provost to design exemplary library services and collections for the new century, we believe that the best way to make progress toward our strategic goals, and to provide support for the strategic goals of the University
of Illinois, is to embrace new service models that recognize the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of academic inquiry, the critical importance of digital information resources, and the opportunities for collaborative approaches to the provision of library services and collections using information technology.

At the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, we believe that the academic library of the twenty-first century will be distinguished by the scope and quality of its service programs. Fundamental changes in the information and academic environments, however, demand new approaches to defining, designing, and delivering library services. An approach to library service designed for the twentieth century retains limited value if it cannot adapt to the demands of a new era in teaching, learning, and scholarship. To meet the challenge of designing a library for the next generation, we must embrace changes to our organization and to traditional ways of conducting our work. The opportunities for change are myriad, but the changes we choose to make must be consistent with our core values of service to teaching, service to scholarship, and service to our cultural heritage. The future of the
University Library must be guided by these service imperatives.

Through our planning process we have engaged as many of you who wanted to be engaged, along with other faculty and students on campus, and in a few cases, scholars and librarians from other institutions, too. That engagement was affirming of the Library’s importance to the University and to the world of scholarship; it was particularly affirming of the importance of our collections and our expertise, and critical to pointing to significant challenges. Our work resulted in about two dozen recommendations that are in the process—or will soon be in the process—of being planned for implementation. I think the Provost best summed up our work in her message that prefaces our final report:

This Report demonstrates the commitment of our faculty and staff to the collections and people that have made our Library a pre-eminent scholarly resource for the campus, the State, and the world. It recognizes the deep connection between the work of the student and scholar and the physical, digital, and human resources found in the Library. By focusing on the role of expert librarians, rich
collections, and physical and virtual spaces designed to meet the needs of faculty and students, and by committing to open and ongoing collaboration with colleagues across the campus and throughout the scholarly community, this Report articulates an approach to meeting the challenge of building a great library for the future while meeting the needs of the present and honoring the contributions of the past.

The Provost’s words do more than endorse and support our efforts. They imply other challenges we must confront.

New Service Model activities were not our only focus last year. Illinois Harvest grew into a ripe service, improving access to a wide array of digital materials. As a free public gateway, it combines search, aggregation, and discovery services to provide organized and thematic access to digitized and born-digital resources about Illinois, created by Illinois scholars, or included among our digital collections. The goal of the Illinois Harvest and of our Large-scale Digitization Initiative is to broaden our digital collections and to enhance access to those collections, as well as to complementary digital resources elsewhere. The number of digital copies of materials from our
collection expanded this year even as we began to prepare for even larger growth when the CIC/Google partnership turns to Illinois’ collections, perhaps as soon as next year. At the same time, we helped to develop the Hathi Trust, the shared digital repository run by Michigan and Indiana, which will aggregate the digital collections, and not just those digitized by Google, of the CIC libraries as well as those of other major research libraries. There are important melodic themes in these and related efforts. The first is our singular leadership in developing and technology applications to improve access; the second represents the rich results of collaborative efforts.

We made good progress in improving access to our content and our services in other ways, too. We launched our new Gateway with its popular and always-improving Easy Search functionality; access to the Easy Search code has been shared with other libraries, confirming the superior functionality it offers. Our virtual Biotechnology Information Center and Women & Gender Resources virtual library branch have been joined by the new Health Information Portal, which also features Health Easy Search functionality, and will soon be joined by the Labor and Employment Relations Digital Library. These are indicative of
the many virtual service programs that provide the different rhythms that are becoming a hallmark of our Library.

Another challenge bloomed in front of our eyes last year: mold. The result of years of underinvestment in proper storage facilities, among other factors, were not one but two mold outbreaks last year, the first in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library vault and the second in the University Press Building. The first outbreak has been treated and plans are now underway to replace the aged and mostly ineffective HVAC equipment that services the space. During the rather long time it will take to design, engineer, manufacture, and install the new equipment, we are working with F&S to try to control environmental conditions as best we can. Remedies for the second outbreak are still being examined. These discordant blares puncture our sensibilities, remind us of the importance of creating and maintaining proper environments and routines for storing the content entrusted to us, no matter the format that contains the content, and compel us to keep playing this melody for the University administration loudly and clearly.

We had a blockbuster year in fund-raising. By the end of June we had exceeded our Brilliant Futures campaign goal of $30
million by more than $2 million. We raised $9,694,740.89 in FY08 and since then have raised nearly $300,000 more. I am personally very pleased and honored to tell you that Bob and Juanita Simpson have endowed the Library Deanship—the first dean’s position on campus to be endowed at the new $5 million level. Raising external funds to support our goals is absolutely essential to the Library’s future, and success depends on many people. Thanks go to our Advancement Team and to every one of you who has said thank you to a donor or provided services with courtesy and consideration. Many things go into an individual’s decision to support the Library financially, most important of which is a positive experience yesterday, today, or tomorrow. So, although we’ll have a new, higher, goal to reach soon, let’s take this opportunity to applaud ourselves for collectively exceeding that initial challenge. Donors are the not only source of external funding. Thanks to the good ideas and good work of many of our Library faculty and staff, 17 grants funded by external agencies last year brought us more than $800,000. These funds support our creativity and allow us to develop new tools, apply new methodologies, test new services, and assist librarians in other countries. Congratulations to all of you whose proposals were funded this year and to all of you who are
working on projects funded by external agencies and all of my encouragement and best wishes to those of you who are awaiting decisions on your grant proposals or who are busy preparing new ones.

It was a busy, fulfilling, and challenging year. These are only a few highlights of all the many things in which we were engaged. I could take much more time to talk about our partnerships on and off campus, our efforts to improve access, the maturation of the Learning Commons, our national awards for our gaming programs and for Archon, the individual awards garnered by our faculty, our outreach activities, our Return on Investment study and other assessment work, individual service activities and service programs, significant content acquisitions, and more. Perhaps you’ll think this section of my talk ends, like “Kukush,” much too abruptly. But there’s a haunting melody ahead, one that, as “Eden,” will challenge us with a variety of rhythms. Although New Service Model activities will continue to occupy us this year, they absolutely cannot be the only thing we do to meet the many challenges that lie ahead.

For the last three years, the Council of Deans has held intensive planning retreats. he first two focused on refining
the objectives of the campus strategic plan and ensuring that campus goals were ambitious and also both realistic and consistent with the efforts of individual colleges and units. This work provided a basis on which to build initiatives such as New Service models, initiatives that have the potential to move the campus forward with success and a sense of optimism for the future. It also built the foundation for the strong team that now characterizes the Council of Deans. This year’s retreat was influenced by the trends in higher education and society in general that I noted earlier; it focused on the theme of re-envisioning our institution. Together, the deans have agreed that traditional reactions to the present financial and intellectual challenges will not help the campus achieve its goals. Some of you have read the executive summary of the deans’ work, but I’m going to assume that many of you have not yet had the time to do so. Here is what the Council of Deans had to say:

The typical methods of addressing such challenges lead to loss of quality and deceleration in progress toward critical goals and objectives. Most efforts to protect and defend lead to compromise and are not appropriate for an institution that wants to achieve beyond traditional
boundaries. We recognize that we need new methods to help us:

• Re-invigorate ourselves, rather than withdrawing,

• Redefine our identity instead of trying to protect what the past has created for us, and

• Move ahead aggressively in place of retrenching until better times are restored.

Public research universities must take control of our future by taking action, supporting excellence, and questioning mediocrity. These institutions must increase flexibility and, where necessary, reconsider their structure and self-imposed constraints. Employees must be empowered and rewarded to make meaningful change, by enacting new approaches, removing barriers, and focusing on increasing customer service. (Re-Envisioning Our Institution, June 8-10, 2008, 
http://www.provost.uiuc.edu/committees/reports/COD%20Report.pdf)
During the retreat, the Council of Deans considered thirty concept papers that have the potential to revitalize the campus. The papers were grouped into four major categories:

- Efficiency and process improvement;
- Improving academic quality;
- Sustaining excellence in human capital; and
- Research and infrastructure improvement.

Most of the initiatives were approved and action planning is underway. Many of the initiatives will include and/or affect the Library; those include financial sustainability, creating a shared data center, integrating student services, process improvement, program reviews, translational research, mechanisms to enable individual efforts to transition towards institutional-level actions, faculty excellence program revisions, right-sizing the institution, entrepreneurial capacity, space management, and more. Three initiatives have direct relevance to us and I have been given responsibility for leading them: The Illinois Digitization Initiative to develop campus-wide priorities and strategies for digitizing materials from our collections; Serving E-Science and E-Scholarship by
building capacity, tools and technologies to promote and support collaborative and networked science and scholarship; and approval to work with ProQuest to digitize our historical collection of Illinois theses and dissertations.

In her annual budget transmission letter, Provost Katehi stressed three areas on which it is important for us to focus our efforts to address critical strategic and core operations: 1) aggressive efforts to secure external funding; 2) energy conservation; and 3) hiring plans. One and two are obvious and need little detailing here, but number three requires a bit more explanation, although the explanation surely will be familiar to you, at least to those of you who have heard me talk about the issues and, more importantly, to those of you who have been engaged in or paid attention to our New Service Models. Here is what Provost Katehi wrote:

(A)s a campus, we do not anticipate significant growth in our student population over the next few years and, thus, ask for very thoughtful consideration as any new hiring is undertaken. You will want to use faculty resignations and departures as an opportunity to redirect hiring plans to critical new and emerging areas and or hold positions open
for a period of time to address resource needs or provide the time for careful consideration of needs. You will want to approach academic professional and staff hiring in the same manner. When new needs emerge in the unit, please consider whether existing staff can be realigned or cross-unit partnerships can be pursued to meet needs rather than moving swiftly to hire additional FTE.

We have been doing this for the past several years. Last year we extended our efforts by planning realignments of our Graduate Assistant and Student assistant budgets to cope with these realities. Clearly there’s more work to do as we move to create our future.

We know where we’ve been, we know the context in which we will operate now and in the foreseeable future. Now, it is time for me to turn to some specific challenges to which we must attend in the next few years, challenges that Provost Katehi talked about generally in her preface to our New Services Model final report. These are not our only challenges, but they are so significant as to require highlighting today. I am not going to spend much time on any of them except for the penultimate
challenge I’m going to raise. And, let me note that these are in absolutely no priority order.

Continuing to develop new service models and implement service programs. We will, of course, continue to refine our plans and implement the new service models recommended last year. They present us with many challenges and many opportunities to realize our vision, but there are other challenges in this area to which we must attend. For years, our Library has been committed to providing excellent services. But, for the most part, we have tended to think of these as unrelated service activities. We answer reference questions at dozens of service points, we apply some technologies in only some locations, and we respond to reference inquiries in varying ways, but we don’t have a reference service program. We circulate materials from dozens of service points, and the policies regarding what circulates to whom and for how long differ from location to location. We carry out circulation activities but we don’t have a circulation program. The list could go on and on. This approach worked well in the twentieth century and in some small number of cases will continue to work well, but in the main those times are now behind us. Twenty-first century students and faculty tell us that they expect
consistency; they expect similar services to be available physically and virtually no matter where or how they are accessed. They expect that within the consistency of service programs there will be service activities designed to meet the needs of particular groups of users, be they delineated by status or by disciplinary or interdisciplinary interests. And they expect us to be agile, to offer new services and develop new service programs quickly. Thus, we face the challenge of continuing to plan and implement our new service models while developing service programs—and by this I mean programs in the full sense of that term, complete with missions, goals, outcomes, and assessment—service programs that meet the needs of our twenty-first century users, including the new needs of our users engaged in e-learning, e-science and e-research. Agility, flexibility, consistency, currency, rapidity, tradition, and change; these are the varying rhythms that must characterize our service programs.

**Evidence-Based Decision Making.** We must be rigorous in making decisions—however rapidly we must make them in the future—and we must base those decisions on evidence. Evidence that is not only, for example, the number of letters objecting to a proposed change, but rather a set of quantitative and
qualitative measures and indicators that provide us verifiable evidence on which to base our decisions. We are finally getting serious about creating a culture of assessment, through which we gather the evidence that will guide us. By this I mean more than simply developing sets of metrics that reflect the outcome of some of the things we do. I mean more than just carrying out occasional user surveys. Rather, I mean that we must develop a culture in which we continuously assess the outcome and impacts of all that we do and in which we use assessment tools as part of our everyday work, as the basis for determining what needs to be changed, what needs to be enhanced, and what needs to be stopped.

**Dealing With Success.** We used to assume that if we started a successful new service, or other activity, we would find the means to sustain it indefinitely. Although it may have been true in the past, it is no longer possible to add something new while continuing to do everything else we’ve always done. Today’s—and tomorrow’s—reality is that we will not be able to add employees to our current total; we will, instead, be under pressure to reduce our staff total over time so as to invest more resources in those whom we employ. Because we must offer new services and
new service programs to our users, this reality leaves us with a limited number of choices if we are to sustain them:

- we can reallocate positions, either through changes made in our current models with current staff or by reallocating positions when they become vacant;

- we can reassign work to employees in other units where there is capacity to take on more; or

- we can stop offering something else.

Yes, stop something else. For many decades, we academic librarians have talked about the need to stop offering one or more services but, in general, we have lacked the courage to do so. We can no longer lack that courage. We must be bold. We must act as we do to in managing our collection budgets. We must use our assessment tools and our best judgments to make hard decisions, to turn from a culture of additive services to a culture of most-needed and used services. We cannot provide every possible service to every possible user.

**Retreating from Perfection.** Many of you have heard me talk about this before. I’ve urged before and I urge again that we must let go of some traditional thinking to which we still
cling, most notably to the myth of perfection. To move as quickly as our users expect and demand and to spend our resources most wisely, we need to step back from our quest for perfection. We truly fool ourselves when we think that perfection was attained in the “good old days.” There were no “good old days” and perfection was never attained, despite our predecessors’ good efforts. The card catalog was certainly not a perfect tool and not all catalog records of the past were perfect either. We need to be practical in balancing our resource investments against their outcomes. We need to ask ourselves critically important questions, such as: are we being responsible stewards if we acquire materials that remain inaccessible for long periods of time? Decades ago we obtained some materials that are still sitting in boxes shoved into dark corners, not discoverable or available for use. Would not scholars and students who may have needed those resources been better served if the materials had been acquired and made accessible by another institution? Just as we would not purchase or accept as a gift a single manuscript from an author whose other works are held in another single institution, we should not be acquiring content that we then hide from view for more than a reasonable time? Acquisition of material must include an
access strategy and plan. And that plan cannot aim for perfection if it keeps us from providing some level of access to other content.

**Diversity.** The Provost emphasized in her letter to me the campus’s core commitment to expanding diversity and access. Although we have made some noteworthy gains in the diversity of our faculty, particularly at the assistant professor level, we are challenged to think boldly and creatively to expand diversity of our faculty and staff. But that alone is not enough to meet the University’s goal of heightening awareness and engagement about issues of identity and the importance of examining and respecting differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, physical ability, and religion, as well as the multiple and intersecting ways we see ourselves and others. I look to the Library Diversity Committee’s leadership on issues regarding Library climate, staff training and development, services to patrons, and campus outreach. But inculcating a culture of diversity extends beyond the purview of the Diversity Committee to every single one of us. We are all responsible for ensuring that our Library family is characterized by a rich set of variations, much as those that set “Eden” apart from “Kukush.”
Space and facilities. I certainly cannot talk about our greatest challenges without including space and facilities. We must pay attention to the Library as place, for our physical environment has the potential to foster learning communities in which our students, faculty, and we share ideas and learn from one another, or work in productive solitude. But, we’re far from realizing this vision; we’re not in a position to offer a physical environment distinguished by ease of use and richness of possibilities in more than a very few locations. Although we have some of the nicest spaces on campus, more of our spaces can be characterized as among the most challenging on campus. We have the opportunity to improve some of those spaces through our New Service Model work, but we will not make progress without significant University investments. We should not overlook the recent investments the University has made to expand our Oak Street Facility (the second module is scheduled to be completed soon), to undertake a thorough study of the Main and Undergraduate Libraries’ infrastructures, and to install life-safety fire suppression systems in the Main and Undergraduate Libraries and its firm commitments to expand the electrical capacity in the Undergraduate Library and to replace the HVAC equipment that services the Rare Book and Manuscript Library
vault. But there is so very much more to be done. We continue to
work with campus to find creative approaches to the significant
funding required for the major renovations necessary to make our
aging buildings ready for twenty-first century faculty and
students. Until that happens, we must all look for ways to make
improvements that require small investments but that will make
big differences to the faculty, students, and others who use our
physical facilities.

Energy. Focus on space and facilities these days leads
to naturally focus on energy use and conservation. There are
many reasons for us to commit ourselves to reducing our energy
consumption. Rather than taking the time to detail them for you,
I think it is more important for me to focus on a very practical
reason: cost. The Library is among the top twenty energy
consumers on campus. Yes, we are among the top twenty energy
consumers on campus. This year, some units were assessed for
utilities costs; although we were not, I will be very surprised
if we don’t face similar assessments in the future. We must find
ways to contain our costs and to help protect the planet for
future generations through creative energy conservation. We have
formed a new working group to help us all understand ways in
which we individually and collectively can conserve our energy
use. I urge everyone to pay attention and to help make the spheres in which we live—from here at Illinois to the world at large—as energy efficient as we can.

E-Science and E-Scholarship. Over the last few years the rise of cyberinfrastructure has created fundamental changes in the ways scholars across the disciplines carry out their work. New research methods have been developed and deployed, fueled by increased network capacity and reliability, high performance computing environments, and the capability to create and share vast amounts of digital data. As even what we think of as “small science” becomes defined by the use of information technology, and as personal data sets and data archives become part of the information that scholars in all fields must manage, we should expect that data services will become an important responsibility for all librarians. Although technology and computational power are the catalysts for e-science and e-scholarship, the success of those initiatives depends on a mix of social, legal, educational, and technical transformations, including those this Library produces. As e-science and e-scholarship increase on campus, we will be expected to embrace new roles to support scholarly and scientific inquiry, identifying data stewardship and data service needs in
constituent departments and programs, providing custom access and discovery services, and consulting on issues of metadata creation and data curation. We will need to work with current partners and new partners to be sure that Illinois faculty and students receive the very best support provided anywhere. We will also need to address complex issues in the scholarly communication environment, expanding the set of skills centered in our IDEALS and scholarly communications programs to library faculty in all fields, which leads me to our next challenge.

**Scholarly Communications and Public Advocacy.** We made progress this year with the appointment of a Scholarly Communications Committee; their good work helped the campus understand and deal proactively with the Congressional mandate to deposit works that emanate from NIH-funded research into the open-access repository PubMedCentral. But issues of scholarly communication, and more broadly of public policies, require much more attention than either one person or a small committee can provide and so I have asked the Office of Services to take responsibility for coordinating our efforts and lifting our voices. It is critically important for us to advocate actively for changes to public policies and other relevant agendas, either in conjunction with other organizations or as Illinois,
working with the Senate Committee on the Library as a vibrant partner. By doing so, we will more readily advance scholarly information and communication and help protect our users’ rights to privacy. These issues are important to every one of us and they should be receiving the attention of all of us. We are challenged to understand the issues, advocate for our perspectives with policy makers, and ensure that the campus community—and that means at the very least all faculty and many graduate students—understand the issues, the impact on their work, and their choices in helping to shape scholarly communication over the short and long run. You will have an excellent opportunity to engage in these issues on Wednesday, September 17, when Teresa Hackett, Manager of eIFL-IP (Electronic Information for Libraries—Intellectual Property) delivers the 18th annual Mortenson Distinguished Lecture titled “Libraries Advocating for Access to Knowledge.” Our challenge is huge and it is hard, but we cannot turn our backs to it or assume that others will take up our cause. Either we meet it or we fail our faculty and students, our university, and scholarship at large.

Collections. The University entrusts us with millions of dollars to invest in our collections. We must be responsible
stewards of its funds in order to meet its goal of having a world-class library that is an essential factor in recruiting and retaining faculty. We face two critically important challenges if we are to succeed. The first is the easier of the two: determining our digitization and digital library strategies. The work of the campus Illinois Digitization Initiative committee will do critical work in determining strategies that best meet the University’s needs. As demands for increasing the size of our digital collections grow louder, it will be necessary to consider investing some funds now used to acquire or access new content in reformatting content that currently sits on our physical shelves.

The second challenge is much more daunting, and it is the penultimate challenge about which I’ll talk this morning. Since our beginning in 1868 we have built a great library collection, distinguished by large pockets of significant strength. We built a world-class collection of rare books and manuscripts comprised of many significant collections. We also built many rich and distinguished collections that are held outside of our special collections, rich and distinguished collections that are too numerous to enumerate this morning. We built these collections
by using our own expertise, by working closely with our scholars, and sometimes by being lucky.

Today, however, we face unprecedented challenges owing to the explosion of scholarly output and types of content, as well as to our financial inability to collect at levels of depth, breadth, and comprehensiveness that distinguished our historically important collections. And so, our challenge today is to develop strategies that will continue our legacy, our responsibility, of building and maintaining distinctive research collections. Later this month, the Collection Development Committee will begin to grapple with how we meet this challenge, how we define twenty-first century research collections and what strategies we choose to ensure that President James’ vision of Illinois’ library as a core element in recruiting and retaining the very best faculty and students continues to be realized.

I want to offer just a few thoughts about strategies, choices, and priorities that might help us meet the challenge of building a twenty-first century collection that is as successful in meeting its goals as was we did in the twentieth century, recognizing that our strategies will not necessarily parallel those of other distinguished research libraries or those of the
campus’ strategic plan, which is, after all, a short-term plan. Building distinguished collections requires a long-term perspective, not one that shifts every few years. I also offer these ideas while recognizing that they are easier to articulate than to carry out and that they will not be pleasing to everyone.

Our current model of supporting collections across the board and our various approaches to reallocating collection funds over the last decade are neither sustainable nor effective in building a great twenty-first century research library that supports both general curricular and research needs and builds distinguished collections. If content today is common, then we must capitalize on its commonality and seek out the uncommon or rare in which to invest.

Resource sharing, particularly through I-Share, can be considered a success. With the initiation of a new delivery system this year, the ability of our faculty and students to request and receive materials from other libraries quickly has been greatly enhanced. In our resource sharing arrangements, we are a net lender of journals and a net borrower of books. We must take advantage of this by relying more on just-in-time
delivery of books through I-Share as well as through Own-Not-Loan type programs, interlibrary loan, and other creative ways to get commonly-held materials into our users’ hands rapidly and efficiently. Yes, I recognize that this means acquiring fewer commonly-held items through purchase, relying on fast-access through fast delivery resource sharing, and using creative approaches to getting commonly held materials into our users’ hands. And yes, I recognize that to ensure long-term access, we must lead and resolve discussions about last-copy print retention in I-Share, the State, the CIC, and other appropriate groups. To be successful, we must also work with trusted partners to enhance our collections through cooperative action. What did not work in the 1980s, when cooperative collection development was last considered seriously, will work in the 2000’s and 2010’s.

We must make wise investments in e-resource collections and packages and we must choose to enhance existing significant collections and build new ones, including digital content, which will take priority over more common content.

To conclude my thoughts about this critically important challenge, let me summarize. Our challenge is to meet the
general curricular and research needs of our faculty and students and to identify, define, and maintain and build the research collections that will sustain our place among the world’s great public research libraries. We cannot ignore or walk away from this challenge. We cannot be territorial. We must be creative. We must be bold. We must succeed.

We face other challenges, of course: eliminating access backlogs, enhancing discovery and retrieval capabilities; supporting learning activities and augmenting learning outcomes; preserving our content no matter its format, working with current partners such as I3, IACAT, ATLAS, CITES, CARLI, and others, and building new collaborations; and raising more money. These are only a few. But, since we don’t have much time, I want to focus on a final challenge today, perhaps your biggest challenge: me. I intend to be relentless in pushing us to meet these challenges firmly and boldly. If we do not, we will have failed to carry on the heritage, the legacy, and the responsibilities left to us by those who came before us.

This is just a taste of what you can expect in the year ahead. We’re seeing enormous changes in society, higher education, and our university. We’re also seeing enormous
changes in the ways in which our faculty and students carry out their teaching, learning, and research. We must be innovative, agile, adaptable, flexible, entrepreneurial, and bold. These are important—no, essential—characteristics of a successful world-class twenty-first century research university library. Just as the campus is committed to not withdrawing or hunkering down through these times, so must we, too, be committed to re-envisioning the Library of the twenty-first century—our Library in the twenty-first century—and to turning that vision into reality. For, as I have been telling you for nearly a decade now: “Visions without actions are just hallucinations.”

I cannot speak without reiterating what I’ve said in previous years, and it pains me more each year that I have to call your attention to the poor—sometimes despicable—ways in which we act towards one another. We still make gratuitous negative, often nasty, comments about one another. We put others down by starting responses with “no,” “but,” or “however” without even thinking about it, thus dampening creativity and demeaning our colleagues. We act with incivility out of anger—we hang up mid-conversation, we shout at each other, and we still often treat each other as we would not want to be treated, neglecting to say hello to a colleague or to offer a simple
thank you for a kindness, even failing to say good morning to one another. These are not acceptable behaviors, they simply are not acceptable. As Michelle Obama reminded us last week, we were all raised to respect one another no matter our disagreements. We must pay attention to changing these behaviors. This is not just talk. Remember, it’s not “all about me;” it’s “all about us.” Our future success as a twenty-first century library depends on it.

We have faced and met significant challenges before and we will continue to do so. How we meet these new challenges, whether they seem exciting or daunting, whether we fizzle out or continue on, varying our rhythms when we should, depends on you. Your attitudes, your behavior towards one another, your tolerance for ambiguity, your willingness to embrace—or at least to accept—change are critical to our future success. Working together we will remain one of the world’s great research libraries throughout the twenty-first century. I’m sure of it.

Thank you very much.