

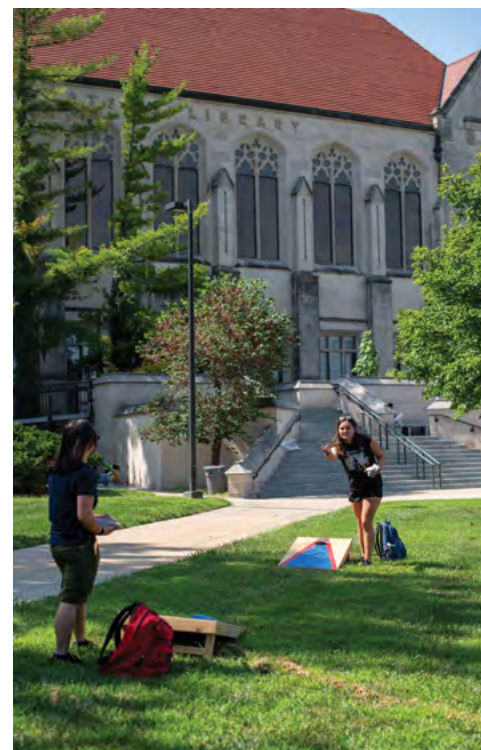
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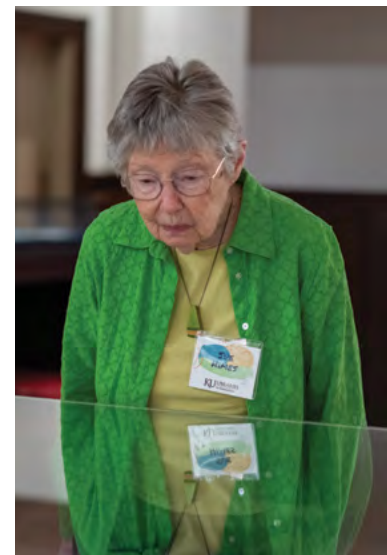
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS LIBRARIES

ANNUAL REVIEW



KU
LIBRARIES
The University of Kansas





KU LIBRARIES

The University of Kansas

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A MESSAGE FROM LIBRARIES LEADERSHIP

A library door is so much more than an entrance; it is an invitation to discovery. Step through our doors, and an unexpected encounter may alter the direction of a conversation, a friendship, a project, or even a career path. The stories throughout this *Annual Review* reveal how KU Libraries serve as a powerful campus catalyst for transformation.

Sometimes the transformation is deeply personal, as when hands-on work with medieval manuscripts helps spark a student's new passion.

Sometimes the transformative impact is campus-wide, as with open educational resources lowering financial barriers and creating richer learning experiences for thousands of KU students.

The doors of KU Libraries also open outward. Through traveling exhibits, public programs, and community collaborations, KU's legacy of impactful scholarship and enduring traditions reach audiences far beyond our campus buildings. Via the international partnerships fostered by our Institute for Globally Engaged Librarianship, knowledge creation is even extending across borders.



A transformative library encounter often begins simply, when individuals bring their questions and lived experiences into contact with our rich collections, expertise, technology, and one another. From such moments, entirely new ideas become possible.

This is precisely how libraries activate change. By creating the rich conditions in which discovery can take hold, transformation follows. I invite you to step through the pages of this issue and through the doors of our libraries to meet some of the many people who propelled this promise of KU Libraries to full fruition this year.

Keep exploring,

Carol E. Smith
Dean of Libraries

CONTENTS



3 PAST MEETS PURPOSE
Library work helps student find confidence and a future built around materials that fascinate him

5 HANDS ON HISTORY
Sustained student collaborations create lasting access to collections, spark scholarship

7 GREEN LIGHT FOR CONVERSATION & COMMUNITY
John Green's sold-out KU visit kicks off a year of KU Reads common book program

9 THE STORIES WE GATHER
Student collectors and curators reveal how books become doorways to discovery and connection

11 THE KETTLE
A place where Hawks gather and soar

13 ART AT THE HEART
Student artists honored among record LibArt program

14 READ ALL ABOUT IT
More than a century of KU student journalism now online

15 LIBRARIES CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
KU Libraries expands connections and builds bridges across cultures

17 A GIFT THAT OPENS DOORS
A vision sparked by two longtime champions of KU Libraries takes shape through growing exhibit program

19 SEEKING SOLUTIONS
Sprints Week turns headaches into breakthroughs

21 TINY TAGS, BIG MIGRATION
Makerspace 3D-prints practice tags for monarch research

22 EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEES
Honoring excellent libraries faculty & staff

23 EXPANDING & EVOLVING
Growing collections, modernizing systems

25 LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS
Opening doors to learning, building campus momentum

27 MILESTONE MIXTAPE
A celebration of KU music and dance takes center stage

PAST MEETS PURPOSE

Library work helps student find confidence and a future built around materials that fascinate him



When Eli Kumin applied for a student assistant position at Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the end of his sophomore year, he was simply looking for a job to help support his time at KU. He didn't know that job would introduce him to a mentor, uncover a passion for medieval history, and help set the course for his future.

Now, as he prepares for graduate work in Medieval Studies at Trinity College in Dublin with library school also on the horizon, the impact is clear.





“Working at the libraries is the most valuable experience I’ve had at KU.”

—Eli Kumin

Kumin began working in Spencer Library public services where he staffed the reception desk, checked patrons in to the reading room or helped visitors find their way to exhibits or meeting spaces. As part of his duties, he learned how to perform catalog checks, shelve items, retrieve materials, and carry out other daily tasks of the library.

In addition to developing strong skills in information organization and honing the attention to detail required for archival work, Kumin said some of his most meaningful learning moments at the library included opportunities to collaborate and communicate with others.

“I came to KU very shy, and I feel like being a public-facing representative has helped me open up and be better at talking to people and engaging with people,” Kumin said. “That’s been really valuable.”

In the fall of his junior year, Kumin’s libraries experience took a momentous turn when he connected with Digital Humanities Librarian John McEwan. Through the libraries’ Sanders Scholars program, Kumin worked with McEwan to improve search tools for Spencer’s sigillographic collections

— medieval seals that often survive as part of historic documents, in this case parchment manuscripts from 13th century England that are part of Spencer’s Abbey Dore Collection.

The sigillography collaboration proved to be a natural fit for Kumin, a May 2026 graduate with a bachelor’s degree including majors in English, Classics, and Philosophy, as well as established interests in history and Latin. The project also activated his drawing skills as he worked to recreate visual representations of the seals for the catalog. The work quickly turned into a passion and represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of his interests and career plans.

“Working on that project was probably almost entirely responsible for my decision to go on to graduate school in Medieval Studies,” Kumin said. “And it was really through Dr. McEwan that I figured out I want to focus on 12th through 14th century England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.”

Before heading to Ireland in fall 2026, Kumin spent one more summer working at Spencer Library and taking part in another project with McEwan, who became an important mentor. As McEwan conducted research at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, Kumin lent support from Kansas by turning scans of historic seal materials into structured data for future use.

As he traced lives from centuries ago, Kumin found something of his own: a clearer sense of what he loves, and where he’s going next. ■

EXPLORE MORE



Medieval seals from the Abbey Dore collection.

The Abbey Dore collection gives glimpses into land, religion, and royal power in medieval England. Explore the collection at rockcha.lk/Abbey.

SPENCER STATS 2025



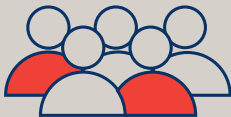
1,162

RESEARCHER VISITS TO STOKSTAD READING ROOM, WITH UNDERGRADUATE VISITS INCREASING 47% YEAR OVER YEAR



192

INSTRUCTION SESSIONS FOR KU CLASSES



1,569

ATTENDEES AT TOURS AND EVENTS



Conservation staff and students Ricky Godsil, Whitney Baker, Kaitlin McGrath, Brenna Hobbs, and Reece Wohlford. Not pictured Angela Andres.



POSITIVE PROGRESS WITH GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES

Some puzzles have missing pieces. Others have pieces from an entirely different puzzle mixed in. This year's Ringle Conservation Intern, Richard "Ricky" Godsil III, tackled the complex challenge of separating confused and comingled collections of glass plate negatives from two photographers in the Kansas Collection. With careful research and conservation work, Godsil labeled, rehoused, and "deconfused" 3,225 items, carefully considering where each piece of the puzzle belonged. The work ultimately inspired the focus of Godsil's master's thesis in museum studies.

Combining detective work with conservation practices, Godsil also increased the accessibility and discoverability of more than 3,600 items in the historic Hannah Scott collection. Working with the glass plate negatives of the pioneering photographer from Independence, Kansas, Godsil researched names, locations, and military affiliations associated with the photographs that offer a glimpse into life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The added context will eventually be part of a fully discoverable online finding aid, helping to make the collection more useful and searchable for researchers, genealogists, and future scholars.

THE STUFF OF CAMPUS HISTORY



Brenna Hobbs got to hold pieces of university history in her hands — and help ensure their stories remain accessible for generations to come. As a Graduate Assistant in Conservation Services, Hobbs focused on improving the management and preservation of three-dimensional archival objects. From Jayhawk statues to the glass tube used to create the first laboratory-produced sample of helium and much more, Hobbs compiled a detailed item-level inventory of more than 1,500 objects in the University Archives, making the items more discoverable by library users. She also helped create practical systems for organizing and protecting the unique materials, generating original scholarship as part of her capstone project in museum studies. The project will have lasting impact, improving future access to collections, and the preservation of campus history.

“It definitely renewed my KU pride, for sure,” Hobbs said of the project. “I’ve gotten very familiar with the evolution of the Jayhawk and all of its various iterations. Walking around campus, all of the buildings are named after different people and I’m like, ‘Oh, I dealt with their stuff.’”

THE CURIOUS CASE OF “POISON BOOKS”

Some historic books are more than fragile — they may also carry traces of toxic materials. Reece Wohlford, a May 2026 graduate with a bachelor's degree in English, played a key role in KU Libraries' participation in the Poison Book Project, an international research initiative examining heavy metals in 19th century book collections. Participating institutions test books for substances like arsenic, mercury, or lead, sometimes used in pigments or bindings. The work helps protect staff and library users, while deepening the understanding of historic collections.

Wohlford worked in the lab mending books and making protective housings for about a year and a half before taking on the special project, under the careful mentorship of Head of Conservation Services Whitney Baker.

“We’re learning things every day, which is really fun,” Wohlford said. Having been very protective of books since childhood, Wohlford said discovering conservation services as a real career path “sounded like a dream.”



CONSERVATION LAB 2025





John Green and KU English professor Giselle Anatol on the Lied Center stage (top). A student waits in line for tickets (right).

GREEN LIGHT FOR CONVERSATION & COMMUNITY

John Green's sold-out KU visit kicks off a year of shared reading, reflection and connection through KU Reads common book program

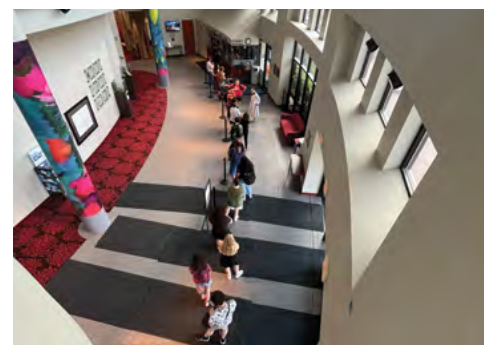


Student excitement helped launch the 2025 common book program with unmistakable momentum, as tickets to see author John Green discuss his book, “The Anthropocene Reviewed,” were claimed within a day — filling the Lied Center with 1,500 students, staff, faculty and community members eager to hear from the bestselling author of this year’s KU Reads selection.

At the September event, Green spoke with the KU community about curiosity, asking questions of the world, and developing one’s own writing style. The energy surrounding the event underscored how deeply the book resonated across campus. Green told the audience, “I never imagined that [the book] would be read in an academic context by so many smart young people. It is such a gift to me ... I really appreciate y’all reading it and I really appreciate being able to be in conversation and community with you.”

The event was a collaborative effort among the KU Reads partners — KU Libraries, the Hall Center for the Humanities, and Academic Affairs — with support from the Madison and Lila Self Graduate Fellowship Program. It served as a high-profile starting point for a year of programming designed to connect readers through shared inquiry, reflection, and community engagement, facilitated by KU Libraries Common Book Librarian Samantha Greeson.

“John Green’s talk launched this year’s programming by inviting us to reflect on our own corner of the Anthropocene here at KU,” Greeson said. “Throughout the year, we continued that exploration by considering what it means to live in this moment and how, together, our actions can shape the future we hope to create. Along the way, this book inspired thoughtful conversations and meaningful connections across campus and the Lawrence community, reminding us that even small steps, taken together, can create lasting change.”



Students arrived early, lining up to claim tickets to the Green event.



KU Reads distributed approximately 3,000 copies of the book to students, staff, faculty, campus partners, and community members. Distribution efforts extended the program’s reach through collaborations with the University Honors Program, Self Graduate Programs, Summer Freshman Orientation, New Faculty Orientation, the Teaching Summit, and Fuel Up for Finals events with KU Libraries and HawkLink.

Momentum continued through “Lawrence Reviewed,” a KU Reads initiative that invited students and community members to critically engage with their own local slice of the Anthropocene by contributing reviews of the places, objects, and experiences that shape KU and Lawrence. From August 2025 through May 2026, participants submitted 376 reviews through class assignments, website submissions, and pop-up events where they reviewed the Jayhawk, KU Libraries, and more KU and community topics.



Jayhawks fill the Lied Center (above). Green signs books and greets excited students (bottom).

These efforts carried the enthusiasm for Green’s visit into sustained conversations about reading, writing, curiosity, and place — demonstrating the common book program’s power to bring the KU and larger community into shared conversation. ■

THE STORIES WE GATHER

Student collectors and curators reveal how books become doorways to discovery and connection



Student finalists gather at the 68th annual Snyder Book Collecting Contest (top). Graduate student Nick Hoekstra and KU alumna Stephanie Stillo serve as contest judges (bottom left). Finalists share their collections with the campus community (bottom right).





THE KETTLE

A place where Hawks gather and soar

When Undergraduate Engagement Librarians Amber Ovsak and Sarah McCall set out to reimagine an underused space on the third floor of Watson Library, they had a clear vision: create a welcoming environment where students could gather, recharge, learn, and build community — without it feeling like a classroom. The name they landed on says it all. A “kettle” is a group of hawks gliding together on rising thermal air currents, and in that same spirit, The Kettle was designed to be a place where every Jayhawk could lift each other up and soar.





Undergraduate Engagement Librarian Amber Ovsak assists in painting the mural.



Student designer Danny Duong in front of the new mural in The Kettle.

With support from the Mary McCorison Rosenbloom Special Initiative Fund, Ovsak and McCall spent more than a year bringing that vision to life, collaborating with library colleagues across Undergraduate Engagement, Public Services, and the libraries' Makerspace. The result, located in Watson Library room 325, is a flexible, comfortable space — furnished for gathering and equipped with a large video monitor for film screenings. The room is open for students to study, connect, or simply decompress whenever programming is not in session.

Since launching, The Kettle has become home to weekly book clubs, drop-in student support hours, a seed library offering free herb, vegetable, and flower seeds to the campus community, and more. The space also has a growing collection of leisure activities like puzzles, games, and coloring supplies. One of the year's standout moments was a three-part Studio Ghibli movie series this spring, which went beyond a fun afternoon screening to include discussion led by KU Film and Media Studies' David Mai and Haskell Indian Nations University's David Titterington — combining a relaxing study break with a genuine cross-campus conversation about film and storytelling.

Students haven't just been visitors to The Kettle, they've helped shape it. To bring the space's name and spirit to life visually, KU Libraries partnered with a Visual Communications junior seminar taught by KU professor Jeremy Shellhorn. The class project generated 20 distinct mural concepts capturing what it means to "gather and soar," with students presenting initial concepts and revising based on library committee feedback. The selected design by Danny Duong — who coincidentally worked as a libraries student assistant in the digitization lab — features a wall of unique hawks, fluffy clouds, and native flowers. The mural was finished over the summer and will be officially unveiled at the start of the fall 2026 semester, becoming a lasting, student-designed centerpiece for a space built by and for students.

"The Kettle was born through several initiatives aligning in a meaningful way, and a desire to develop a flexible and welcoming space to host student programming," said Jill Becker, head of the libraries' Center for Undergraduate Initiatives & Engagement. "With encouraging support from library leadership, we now have the space we imagined." ■

ART AT THE HEART

Student artists honored among another record LibArt turnout



Kaden Cogdill accepts the LibArt Best in Show award.

KU Libraries' LibArt program, a year-round, juried exhibition of student art in library spaces, celebrated its largest-ever display of student artwork and named award recipients with a reception in October at Watson Library.

The libraries set a record for the largest show in the program's history during the 2024-25 academic year, but surpassed that mark by 114 works, forming an exhibition of 260 pieces of artwork from 113 students in its 15th year. Prizes were awarded to 23 works in 14 categories, representing a wide variety of mediums and subjects.

"The LibArt program truly represents libraries at their very best," KU Libraries Dean Carol Smith said during remarks at the reception. "We are community platforms that bring people together. We are multidisciplinary places for the exchange of ideas and the appreciation of many points of view, and you have contributed to that."

Art pieces were submitted by students from 51 disciplines, including art and design students as well as participants majoring in economics, mechanical engineering, physical education, social work, journalism and more with some taking part in their first art exhibit experience.

"We had twice as many submissions this year as the previous year," said Rebecca Schroeder, operations manager of Murphy Art & Architecture Library and chair of the LibArt committee. "The judges continue to be impressed with the talent and creativity demonstrated by students who participate."

The LibArt committee, headed by Schroeder and made up of KU Libraries staff, partners with KU faculty and staff, local artists, educators, and museum professionals to judge the works and award prizes totaling \$5,400.

This year's Best in Show award was presented to Kaden Cogdill, a visual art education major from Rock Island, Illinois, for the ceramics piece "Neavergale," which was inspired by playing a fantasy adventure table-top game with friends.

"This is one of the greatest feelings I've had at KU," Cogdill said, describing how the LibArt experience combined his love of art, ceramics, and being part of the campus community. "It's all just so magical, and I think that's what makes education so important and what makes KU so wonderful."

Sam Hale, an art history major from Overland Park, won top honors in the painting category and also took home a new award connected to the KU Reads common book program. His painting "Roots" was selected as the Common Work of LibArt, representing an artistic connection with themes throughout the 2025-26 common book, "The Anthropocene Reviewed" by John Green.

"That painting is really special to me," Hale said. "It was part of a series I did kind of about my own relationship with my family and my community, and it means a lot to me that it's going to be able to be seen by other people...I feel like all I do is create and usually it just gets shoved in my closet, but being able to be in a room full of people that are seeing my work and being acknowledged for it is amazing."

The LibArt show runs August to May each academic year throughout five KU Libraries locations, with student artworks available for viewing whenever the libraries are open. The success and growth of this year's show was made possible by contributions from Michael and Kathryn Hughes, whose generosity helps fund the continuation of the LibArt program. ■

LIBART ANYWHERE



Visit lib.ku.edu/libart to view the digital show, see the full list of winners from 2025, and preview this year's exhibition.

READ ALL ABOUT IT

More than a century of KU student journalism now freely available online

KU Libraries have digitized more than 140 years of University of Kansas student newspapers, from the first campus publication in 1878 through 2017, making the collection freely available through Kenneth Spencer Research Library's digital repository.

The project brings online nearly 200,000 page images from 171 reels of microfilm, encompassing the "University Daily Kansan" (UDK) and seven predecessor publications dating to the university's earliest years. The KU Student Newspapers Collection spans eight distinct student newspapers, beginning with The "University Courier" in 1878 and tracing the evolution of campus journalism through the UDK, which has carried that name since 1912.

"The UDK tells the story of KU from the student perspective," said Beth Whittaker, associate dean for distinctive collections and director of Spencer Research Library. "Now we're telling that story to the world."

The student newspaper has long ranked among the most-used resources in Spencer Research Library's reading room, alongside course catalogs, yearbooks, and university budgets. Previously, access to the collection often required navigating microfilm readers, a technology unfamiliar to many researchers, during library hours. The digitized collection is now available around the clock to anyone with internet access without the need to visit campus.

The project, years in the making, required collaboration across multiple KU Libraries departments, including cataloging, conservation, digitization and digital initiatives staff, as well as partnership with the Kansas Historical Society, which provided access to pristine master microfilm reels. KU Libraries' own copies had accumulated wear from decades of use.

"I'm grateful that I get to work with incredibly resilient, adaptable colleagues, whose creativity and expertise was essential to completing this lengthy, complex project," said Scott Hanrath, associate dean for research engagement.

The scale of the undertaking became apparent early. Of the 171 total microfilm reels, 42 showed signs of vinegar syndrome, a form of film deterioration requiring special handling, and the final repository collection represents approximately five terabytes of image data. Two full-time staff members — KU Libraries' Digitization Coordinator Melissa Mayhew and Digitization Specialist Warren Lambert — and six library student employees spent more than 300 hours conducting multiple quality assurance reviews of the files. Marianne Reed, KU Libraries' digital publishing and repository manager, aided the effort as project manager as well as supervising student quality assurance reviewers.



BROWSE THE COLLECTION



Scan the QR code or visit rockcha.lik/DailyKansan to view 140 years of digitized University Daily Kansan issues.

The collection is organized by year and month, allowing researchers to browse chronologically through a newspaper's run. KU Libraries is also piloting an innovative approach to make the dense, complex pages more navigable, using artificial intelligence to generate tables of contents for individual pages, extracting headlines to give users a quick sense of each issue's contents.

"This is an exploratory effort," Hanrath said, noting that the AI-generated metadata is transparently labeled as such. "We know it's not perfect, but it is a promising way for us to add value to the materials in this collection."

The approach was developed by Erin Wolfe, KU Libraries' digital initiatives librarian, and represents a significant improvement over traditional optical character recognition, which can perform poorly on the irregular layouts and varying print quality found across a century of newspaper production. Full-text search at the article level is the next goal.

The project was supported in part by KU alums Scott and Lisa Ritchie, whose philanthropic support for KU Libraries reflects a belief that the university's history should be accessible to anyone, not just those who can visit campus today, but those who want to understand how KU has transformed over time. ■

LIBRARIES CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

KU Libraries expands connections and builds bridges across cultures



Carol Smith and Brian Rosenblum, director of international strategies, at Connecting Codes Conference in Kenya.

For KU Libraries’ internationalization efforts, it was a year of unfolding horizons and first steps towards an expansive vision. With a strengthened commitment to creating new opportunities for librarians, scholars, and students to learn from one another, the libraries fostered a growing network of relationships and programs rooted in the belief that libraries have a unique role to play in connecting people across cultures.

At the center of these efforts is the libraries new Institute for Globally Engaged Librarianship (IGEL), launched in fall 2025 to foster communication, collaboration, and global understanding among librarians and information professionals around the globe. A period of exploration and planning evolved into new international programming in the spring, with global conversations and a visiting scholar opportunity taking shape.

A GLOBAL CONVERSATION BEGINS

One of IGEL’s earliest initiatives, Global Conversations in Librarianship, invites participants to engage with perspectives from around the world on the challenges and opportunities facing libraries today. The series launched with two presentations that underscored the urgency and promise of international collaboration. Tetyana Yaroshenko, deputy director for research and international affairs at the State Scientific and Technical Library of Ukraine, addressed the resilience of Ukrainian libraries during wartime. Former dean of KU Libraries lorraine j. haricombe discussed how libraries can harness digital tools to build more open, inclusive, and connected systems of knowledge.



Former KU Libraries dean lorraine j. haricombe presents as part of the Global Conversations series.



Patience Ocloo, associate professor of Information Studies at the University of Ghana.

A RESIDENCY BUILT ON RECIPROCITY

When Patience Eméfa Dzandza Ocloo arrived in Lawrence from Ghana, she brought more than expertise in information studies. She brought a global perspective, a spirit of collaboration, and a belief that libraries can help bridge cultures and communities. As the first participant in IGEL's Librarian-in-Residence program, Ocloo is helping to launch a new chapter in KU Libraries commitment to global engagement.

The residency builds on years of collaboration between KU Libraries and the University of Ghana, including international symposia and Fulbright Specialist programs led by Brian Rosenblum, now director of KU Libraries International Strategies Division. Ocloo's five-month stay had a focus on AI in libraries, digital humanities, and information literacy — areas that are transforming academic libraries worldwide.

"Librarianship is an international profession," Ocloo said. "All over the world the challenges we face are the same though manifested in different ways. Therefore, we need to learn from each other. Libraries have always thrived on collaborative opportunities, and the residency is one real way we can experience that."

The residency was deeply personal. Ocloo was welcomed by KU Libraries staff and the Lawrence community from the moment she arrived, noting how colleagues helped her feel at home during her first visit to the United States. Alongside research and professional collaboration, she built friendships and connections she expects will endure long after she returns to Ghana in August.

WORLDS MEET AT AFRICA DAY



The sound of conversation, the aroma of West African cuisine, and a shared spirit of discovery filled Watson Library during Africa Day, a spring celebration of the cultures, histories, and scholarship that connect KU with the African continent.

The event highlighted partners at the Kansas African Studies Center, the Department of African and African American Studies, and materials from Kenneth Spencer Research Library, bringing together students, faculty, staff, and community members for an afternoon of learning and connection.

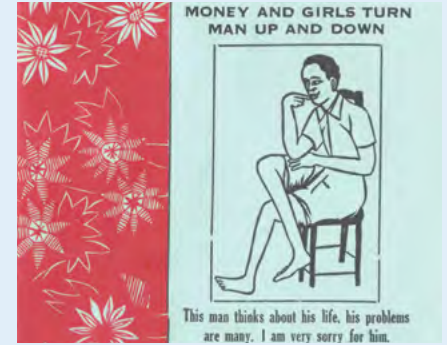
"I came to study today and then I smelled the food and I was like, 'Wait is my mom here?'" said Henriette Yumba, a junior studying accounting and international business who felt an immediate sense of home and welcome from the event.

Africa Day also served as the kickoff to the 2026 Africana Librarians Council Spring Meeting hosted at KU, underscoring the university's role as a hub for global engagement and cross-cultural exchange.

CONNECTING CODES, CONNECTING CONTINENTS

In addition to bringing global perspective to campus, KU Librarians traveled abroad as part of a co-hosting team for the Connecting Codes Conference at the Kenya National Library Service in Nairobi in June. The conference brought together scholars, librarians, heritage professionals, technologists, and students to explore the evolving relationships between artificial intelligence, digital humanities, and information institutions, with a particular emphasis on African contexts and perspectives.

EXPLORE MORE



Africa Day featured the Onitsha Market Literature collection, pamphlets created and sold in the market town of Onitsha in southern Nigeria during the 1960s, in the years between independence and the Nigerian Civil War. Explore the collection at rockcha.ik/Onitsha.

GOING GLOBAL

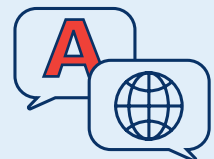


387

DIFFERENT LANGUAGES
REPRESENTED IN COLLECTIONS

MORE THAN

25



LANGUAGES SUPPORTED
BY LIBRARIAN EXPERTISE



COUNTRIES REPRESENTED
IN KU LIBRARIES
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

A GIFT THAT OPENS DOORS

A vision sparked by two longtime champions of KU Libraries takes shape through growing exhibit program



Geraldo Sousa, David Bergeron, and Sarah Jen connect at the “Aging, Art, and Activism” exhibit opening.

For KU English professors emeritus David Bergeron and Geraldo Sousa, the libraries have always been a source of inspiration, discovery, and community. When the longtime KU Libraries supporters established an exhibit fund at Spencer Research Library, they envisioned new opportunities for others to experience those same connections. Now, that vision is steadily taking shape in vibrant and meaningful ways.

Established in 2021, the Bergeron-Sousa Exhibit Fund reflects the couple's deep appreciation for KU Libraries as a vital resource for faculty, students, researchers, and the wider community. In 2023, the fund brought its first exhibition to life with "To the Great Variety of Readers: Celebrating the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio." The exhibit space and North Gallery filled with visitors and spread to overflow rooms where they gathered to hear Bergeron share his passion for Shakespeare and Spencer's collections.

That momentum continued with a thoughtful application and review process in 2024, when Social Welfare professor Sarah Jen's "Aging, Art, and Activism" exhibition was selected and developed in collaboration with curator Phil Cunningham and Spencer Library staff. Opening in spring 2026 to another full room and a new wave of visitors, the exhibition displayed what Bergeron and Sousa's gift makes possible: fresh faculty collaborations, meaningful public engagement, and new pathways into the library's extraordinary collections.



"One of my key takeaways from participating in this process is just the overwhelming richness of the Spencer archives," Jen said. "I came away with at least five new ideas for directions for my scholarship, including contemporary articles to write, new historical collections to explore, and ways to mentor doctoral students into archival work as a possibility for their own scholarship." ■

"The library staff provides so many strengths and professional skill sets that I could never attempt to replicate. The curators know their collections so well and helped me navigate what felt like an endless amount of potential exhibition material."

—Sarah Jen



Sarah Jen introduces the exhibit.



Kansas Collection Curator Phil Cunningham reflects on the exhibit process (top). Campus and community members explore the exhibit together (bottom).





Instructional Design Librarian Kelly Hangauer and instructor Rachel Bechtold collaborating during Sprints Week.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Sprints Week turns research and classroom headaches into breakthroughs

At the beginning of each summer, KU Libraries' Sprints Week gives faculty a rare opportunity: five focused days and a team of expert librarians to untangle their most stubborn academic problems. This year, three research and teaching collaborations tackled everything from the challenges of Ice Age archaeology to engaging large classes in expansive lecture halls. The results included improving structure and access to valuable research data, adopting openly accessible course materials, and the thoughtful redesign of an introductory course.

Anthropology professor Lauren Norman and postdoctoral researcher Caroline Kisielinski arrived with a complex data challenge — years

of field notes, unsearchable PDFs, and error-prone spreadsheets from the Bluefish Caves in Canada's northern Yukon, a site with evidence of human presence dating back 24,000 years. Library experts helped the team build a tiered data system and develop a storytelling platform to share the site's 30,000-year history publicly while protecting sensitive data belonging to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, on whose ancestral lands the caves sit.

"We have made more progress in the last five days than I think the whole research team could have made all summer," Kisielinski said. "The first few days were mentally exhausting because we were learning so much in terms of data management and metadata, and



what it means to actually store, organize, and archive data. If we were to try and do this independently, it would very much be a trying to reinvent the wheel situation, where we have KU Libraries right here. Why not actually try and partner and work with them?”

On the teaching side, biology lecturer Rachel Bechtold restructured BIOL 100 — a course that can draw hundreds of students — around critical thinking and open educational resources. Meanwhile, advisor and lecturer Jake Brillhart overhauled LDST 292: Leading with the Law, to create a leaner, experience-driven curriculum featuring a student podcast on education policy and a full constitutional convention simulation using University Archives at Spencer Research Library as a living classroom.

“We were constantly bouncing ideas back and forth off each other, and I think that was one of the strengths of our team — we all came from different pockets of experience and expertise, and also what we found interesting,” Brillhart said. “I think the real benefit of Sprints Week is you get to jump into a really collaborative space where librarians and academic staff here at KU want to support you. They want to figure out what is working, what strengths do you have, what opportunities and resources do you have, and how can we build onto that?”

“Say yes to Sprints Week, because you're going to build your network. It's going to be a much easier lift because you have a whole team of incredible, intelligent and caring librarians that want to build you up and build your course at the same time.”

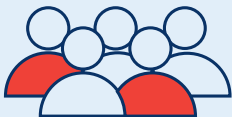
Sprinters are selected by way of an application process and awarded a \$1,000 stipend, which is made possible in part through support from libraries donors. ■



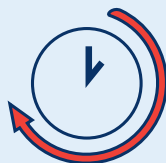
Lauren Norman and Caroline Kisielinski present their project (top left). Rachel Bechtold takes notes during a session (top right). Jake Brillhart talks with his team (bottom).

SPRINTS WEEK

22



FACULTY & STAFF SPRINTS WEEK
PARTNERS SINCE 2016



30-45

INTENSIVE HOURS CONTRIBUTED
BY SPRINTERS AND LIBRARIES
MEMBERS DURING THE WEEK

10



YEARS OF CAMPUS
COLLABORATION

TINY TAGS, BIG MIGRATION

Makerspace 3D-prints practice tags to help track monarch migration



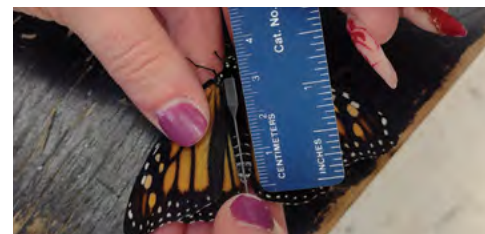
Doctoral student Cailin Kessen works with Makerspace created elements to aid Monarch butterfly research.

At KU Libraries, a project weighing just six milligrams is helped researchers follow one of nature's most extraordinary journeys.

Inside the Makerspace on the second floor of Anschutz Library, students and staff 3D-printed replica radio tags that mimic the devices attached to monarch butterflies. The practice tags are small, precise and inexpensive, a low-risk stand-in for real tracking technology that costs about \$75 per tag.

The collaboration began when doctoral student Cailin Kessen approached the Makerspace with a challenge for Monarch Watch: recreate a tracking tag from rough measurements and photos, then make it light enough for a butterfly to carry.

Makerspace Coordinator Matt Bristow started from scratch, printing, weighing, and refining prototype after prototype until the sixth version hit the target: a replica matching the real tag's shape, size, and six-milligram weight.



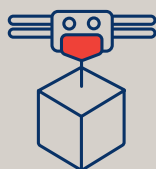
That precision matters. The real tags use solar power and Bluetooth to ping nearby cellphones, sending location data to an app that tracks monarch migration in real time. Before attaching them to live butterflies, Kessen's team can now test adhesives and techniques with lookalikes that cost only pennies to print.

For KU Libraries, the project shows how a free creative resource can move research forward in unexpected ways — turning a rough idea, a few photos and a 3D printer into a tool for studying a migration that spans North America to Mexico. ■

MAKERSPACE 2025

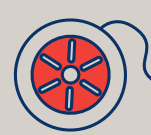


1,616
TOTAL VISITS TO THE SPACE



5,974
3D PIECES PRINTED

52.2
ROLLS OF FILAMENT USED



EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEES

Honoring excellent faculty & staff at KU Libraries



Inaugural Team Collaboration Award winners Samantha Bishop Simmons and Gwen Geiger Wolfe with Carol Smith.

Six faculty and staff members were recognized at KU Libraries annual Celebration of Excellence, held in the North Gallery of Spencer Research Library.

The ceremony included the first presentation of a newly established Team Collaboration Award, which went to Gwen Geiger Wolfe and Samantha Bishop Simmons for founding the Pre-Tenure Cohort in 2022.

Bishop Simmons also received the Anschutz-Budig Outstanding Librarian Award for her work as a humanities librarian in undergraduate information literacy instruction, her leadership in the first-year writing program, and her efforts to integrate AI topics into library curricula.

Michiko Ito, East Asian Studies Librarian, received the Gretchen and Gene A. Budig Distinguished Librarian Award, given for meritorious professional performance throughout a career. Ito has served KU Libraries for more than 27 years, secured

more than 17 external grants and built the Japanese collections into one of the strongest in North America.

Paul Thomas received the Mary McCorison Rosenblum Teaching Award for exemplary library instruction. Since 2023, Thomas has completed more than 4,400 individual consultations and led 70 instruction sessions reaching more than 1,175 students, with a focus on citation management and thesis and dissertation formatting support for graduate students.

Angela Andres, special collections conservator, was honored with a Staff Excellence Award for her work preserving rare materials, curating major exhibitions, and addressing hazardous materials found in 19th-century book bindings. Also awarded was Matt Bristow, Makerspace coordinator, for tripling Makerspace engagement, supporting more than 99 podcast recordings, 59 video projects, and 150 3D printing projects for students and faculty. ■

YEARS OF SERVICE

KU Libraries faculty and staff were recognized by KU for reaching years of service milestones:

35 years

Jim Richey

25 years

Tami Albin
Sharon Riley
Ryan Swartz

20 years

Jeromy Horkman
Brian Rosenblum

15 years

Andi Back
Samantha Bishop Simmons
Elspeth Healey

10 years

Andy Allen
Sunita Gandhi
Nikki Pirch
Paul Thomas
Dani Williams

5 years

Eric Bader
Saige LasKares
Charissa Pincock
Andy Poland

CLOSING CHAPTER

In 2025-26 several KU Libraries employees retired after many years of service:

Deborah Dandridge (39 years)
Verna Froese (42 years)
Sunita Gandhi (10 years)
Kathy Lafferty (37 years)
Lars Leon (40 years)
Marianne Reed (38 years)
Lisa Stewart (30 years)

Are you a former Libraries employee or student staffer? Get occasional library "alumni" updates delivered to your inbox by signing up at rockcha.ik/LibUpdates.

EXPANDING & EVOLVING

Growing collections, modernizing systems, advancing discovery

Libraries have always been cornerstones of learning and discovery. They are also places of constant adaptation, continuously evolving to navigate shifting technologies, changing research practices, and an information ecosystem that grows more complex every day.

Over the past year, the evolution at KU Libraries has been especially visible through major initiatives including significant expansion of digital collections, innovative publishing partnerships that remove barriers to scholarship, and the implementation of a new library services platform (LSP).



Sara E. Morris, head of Collections Strategy and Development, engages students in a discussion about library resources.

A WORLD OF SOURCES

Beginning in spring 2025 and continuing throughout the 2025-26 academic year, the libraries negotiated a new agreement with research database ProQuest, dramatically broadening the scope of available digital resources. The initiative added access to millions of primary sources, journals, government records, newspapers, audio files, and other materials. The result is a remarkable increase in opportunities for teaching, learning, and discovery, and also a reminder that access does not happen automatically. Librarian Sara E. Morris, Head of Collections Strategy and Development, spent months evaluating costs and licensing terms, securing an agreement that maximized the libraries budget. Library faculty and staff devoted considerable effort to integrating and organizing the new resources so researchers could more easily find and use them.

"The materials and resources being added are of immense value and will help KU researchers in a variety of disciplines," Morris said. "All library materials require a village to make them discoverable and usable by our patrons. Multiple departments in the libraries make this happen. Most of them are individuals patrons never see, but they are essential."

"This is about putting primary sources directly into students' hands — including letters, newspapers, court records, and other first-voice materials — so they can analyze, question, and interpret events for themselves. In doing so, they will build authentic research skills and deepen their learning in ways that secondary sources alone do not provide."

—Carol Smith



A variety of new resources aid student and faculty research.

KNOWLEDGE UNLOCKED

Transformative read-and-publish agreements bundle subscription (read) access to journals with open access publishing opportunities for researchers at KU. These innovative partnerships help remove financial barriers for researchers that would otherwise fall to individual authors — sometimes costing hundreds, or even thousands of dollars — while making KU scholarship more widely available to readers around the world.

Over the past academic year, KU Libraries renewed several transformative agreements, including a deal with Elsevier, the world's largest scientific publishing company. The libraries are also continuing read-and-publish agreements with academic publishers Cambridge University Press and Royal Society of Chemistry and have signed new multi-year agreements with Emerald and Wiley, helping to maximize global research impact and provide budgetary predictability for the libraries.

POWERING WHAT'S NEXT

At the same time, library staff worked throughout the year to prepare for the transition to FOLIO, a modern open-source platform that replaced aging technology, providing a more flexible, integrated foundation for library processes and an improved user experience. Migration efforts required extensive planning, testing, training, and collaboration across departments.

"This has truly been a 10-month journey, and reaching this moment would not have been possible without the dedication, collaboration, and hard work of so many across the organization," said Mary Roach, Associate Dean of the libraries.

As the information landscape continues to evolve, KU Libraries is evolving with it. Although much of the libraries' work happens behind the scenes, its impact is felt every day, removing barriers, expanding possibilities, and ensuring that knowledge continues to flow freely in a rapidly changing world.

KNOWLEDGE IN MOTION

Every book, article, database, and borrowed resource has a journey. Long before a researcher clicks request or opens a resource online, the libraries' Acquisitions & Resource Sharing team have been at work. From securing new materials and managing complex licensing agreements to borrowing and lending resources across a global network of partner libraries, the department works behind the scenes to make access possible. In a fast-paced, data-driven environment, staff navigate supply chains, carefully steward collection budgets, and manage resources in multiple languages and formats, all while delivering timely service to the KU community.

IN 2025:



7,764

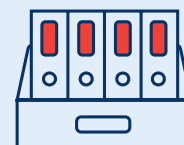
NEW ELECTRONIC BOOKS, JOURNALS,
AND PRINT SERIAL ISSUES ADDED

MORE THAN

26K



REQUESTS FILLED FOR KU PATRONS



87

NEW ELECTRONIC DATABASES OR
DATABASE COMPONENTS

LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS

Opening doors to learning, building momentum across campus



Textbook Hero recipient Trevor Rivers addresses an introductory biology class.

For more than a decade, KU Libraries has championed the adoption of open educational resources (OER) — free, openly licensed teaching and learning materials that reduce costs for students while expanding access to education. In 2026, that work took a significant step forward through the new Deans' Open Educational Resources Grant Initiative developed by the Deans Council, a group convened by the Provost, and supported by a \$225,000 investment from the Office of the Provost.

The initiative is designed to accelerate OER adoption in large-enrollment and KU Core courses, and those with high D,F, and Withdrawal rates, where replacing high-cost commercial textbooks can have the greatest impact. Over the next three years, funding will support faculty stipends, implementation costs, and a new OER Faculty Fellow, helping instructors adopt open resources for their courses.

The investment builds on a strong foundation. Since the launch of the Libraries' OER Grant Initiative, 46 grants have supported 58 courses, affecting an estimated 13,000 students each academic year and generating more than \$1.3 million in annual student savings. KU Libraries also supports the creation and publication of open materials through Pressbooks, with dozens of titles already available or in development.

While reducing textbook costs remains a central goal, the initiative is ultimately about student success. By ensuring students have immediate access to required course materials and empowering instructors to tailor resources to specific learning needs, the program helps create a more equitable and effective learning experience. Together, faculty, campus leaders, and library experts are expanding access to high-quality educational resources with the shared goal of helping more students succeed.

RESEARCH REACHING FURTHER



Rami Zeedan (left) and Jeffrey Girard (right) accepting Shulenberg Awards from Carol Smith.

Each year, the Shulenberg Award for Innovation and Advocacy in Scholarly Communication honors KU scholars who are expanding access to knowledge and helping ideas reach audiences far beyond the classroom and the laboratory. Established through a gift from David Shulenberg, former KU provost and executive vice chancellor, the award encourages the open sharing of research and promotes greater equity in access to scholarly work.

The 2025 honorees, Jeffrey Girard and Rami Zeedan, demonstrate the many ways KU scholars are advancing that mission. Girard, associate professor of psychology, was recognized for a sustained commitment to open science, including widely used open-source tools and datasets cited in more than 2,000 peer-reviewed publications and adopted by hundreds of research groups worldwide.

Zeedan, associate professor of Jewish studies, was honored for broadening access to scholarship through the open-access "Druze Studies Journal," a pioneering platform dedicated to an important but understudied religious community. He also co-created the open textbook "Israel's Divides Explained" with students, transforming classroom research into publicly accessible scholarship through digital media and podcasts.



Trevor Rivers, 2026 Textbook Hero recipient.

ONE INVESTMENT, CAMPUS-WIDE IMPACT

When Trevor Rivers set out to rethink how students encounter introductory biology, he didn't just replace an \$80 textbook. He created a free, multimedia learning experience that will reach nearly 2,000 students each year.

In searching for a lower cost, easily accessible option, Rivers also wanted a resource that better reflected how students learn. The result was "Biology for an Informed World," a multi-faceted open educational resource that helped him transform the classroom experience. Assembled and adapted by Rivers from multiple open sources, the customized text combines reading, videos, interactive materials, and questions, designed to help students connect and build on concepts rather than memorize isolated facts. By linking foundational biological principles to real-world questions and everyday decisions, students are encouraged to build scientific literacy and connect more deeply with the course content.

After learning more about OER opportunities during KU Libraries Open Education Week, Rivers worked with library faculty and received a library grant that helped bring his ideas to life. As the 2026 Textbook Hero, he hopes his recognition encourages other instructors to explore the possibilities of open education.

"You can move the needle in terms of the pedagogical, taking the reins of your class to the level of creating your own textbook, and that is doable, as well as being more cost effective for the students," Rivers said.

WHY OER MATTER

- Free access to course materials from the first day of class
- Reduced financial barriers for students
- Resources can be updated, adapted and improved over time
- Learning materials designed around student academic needs

HOW KU LIBRARIES EMPOWER OPEN EDUCATION

- Grants that help faculty adopt, adapt, and create OER
- Expert consultations and project guidance
- Publishing support through Pressbooks
- Campus partnerships that expand impact and access

IN 2025:



MILESTONE MIXTAPE

A celebration of KU music and dance takes center stage



KU alumni and friends explore University Archives materials in the libraries' traveling exhibit.

ON TOUR WITH JAYHAWK JUKEBOX

KU Libraries unveiled its latest traveling exhibit, "Jayhawk Jukebox: A Mixtape of Musical Memories," at a KU Alumni gathering prior to the football game at UCF in Orlando and visited 16 total cities across the country throughout basketball season. The exhibit invited alumni and event attendees to press play and take a musical spin down memory lane with a toe-tapping tribute to some of KU's greatest music and dance moments.

Shining a spotlight on traditions, people, and show-stopping performances, the exhibit celebrated Gorton Music and Dance Library's 25th anniversary. From halftime shows to headliners, visitors were able to rewind and enjoy highlights via historic items from the University Archives in Kenneth Spencer Research Library.



The exhibit was showcased in partnership with KU Alumni network events across the country, including Jayhawk Roundup in Wichita and at the Champions Classic in New York City. Archival images like the ones featured in the exhibit can be viewed online in the University Archives digital collection, a libraries-maintained repository of thousands of photos, documents, and other KU materials.

Providing access to physical and digital materials is just one way that KU Libraries support all Jayhawks and advance research, teaching, and learning at the intersection of people and ideas. Each year KU Libraries looks forward to sharing our timeless history and traditions as well as connecting with more friends of KU Libraries in cities across the country.



GORTON MUSIC & DANCE LIBRARY CELEBRATES SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the Gorton Music and Dance Library gathered inside to honor the building's silver anniversary with a reception and short program Feb. 12, the first of five events commemorating the occasion.

Guests were treated to a performance by Cornerstone String Quartet student ensemble, while enjoying refreshments, conversation, KU Libraries' Jayhawk Jukebox traveling exhibit, and browsing the stacks, before remarks on the library's past and future.

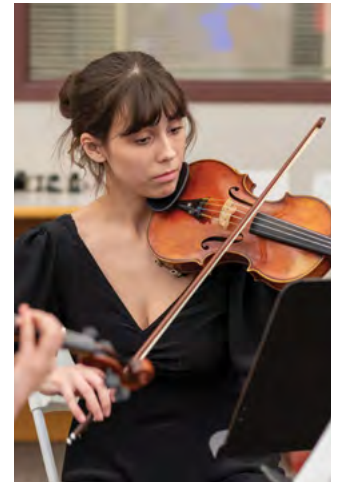
The library opened in summer 2000 as a state-of-the-art facility, replacing cramped quarters in the original Murphy Hall where collections were stored offsite and technology was limited. The new 12,000-square-foot space in the Murphy Hall addition tripled capacity and consolidated music and dance materials in one location.

Executive Associate Dean Mary Roach opened the program by welcoming guests, emphasizing the value of partnership between KU Libraries and KU's schools of performing arts, and noting the dramatic improvement from the previous facility. Emeritus musicology professor Paul Laird traced the music collection's history from the late 1800s through decades of growth across multiple campus locations before consolidating in Murphy Hall, highlighting previous stewards of the collections, many of whom were in attendance.

The library now houses more than 100,000 scores, books, and recordings, plus hundreds of thousands of electronic resources.

"It's an absolute treasure for performers, educators, researchers, clinicians, and creators across our school and beyond," said Paul Popiel, Dean of the School of Music. "It is a place where a student might discover their first orchestral score, or where a faculty member uncovers a piece that reshapes a performance program. These moments of discovery define one of the best learning experiences here in the KU School of Music."

Additionally, the library hosted three lunchtime concerts featuring performances by KU student music groups and welcomed students to Y2K themed birthday party for Gorton Library. ■



Libraries and School of Music staff, and supporters from the community connected to celebrate Gorton Library.

KU LIBRARIES

The University of Kansas

1425 Jayhawk Boulevard
Lawrence, KS 66045

