EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL
AFTER 5:00 PM EST
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6th, 2006

President Mary Sue Coleman
"Google, the Khmer Rouge and the Public Good"
Feb. 6, 2006
Address to the Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division
of the Association of American Publishers

Good afternoon.

Thank you, Pat. And thanks to all of you for inviting me to be part of your annual conference. You have an impressive agenda ahead of you, and I am honored you asked me to open your program.

I come to you this afternoon not only as the president of the University of Michigan. I come to you as a publisher. I come to you as a supporter of authors. And, for some here, I come to you as one of your biggest customers.

We are all here because of our love of books and what they mean to our world.

Perhaps no one appreciated this more than the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, and the embodiment of his appreciation is here in Washington at the Library of Congress, which he resurrected after British troops destroyed it in the War of 1812.

He sold his vast, personal collection of books to the government at a price well below their monetary value, and his holdings became the core of one of the world's great libraries.

Jefferson knew the true value of books. Years earlier, when a disastrous fire destroyed his family home, his initial response was not to inquire whether anyone was hurt, but to ask, "What about my books?"

I know that same question – What about my books? – is very much on your minds, as well as authors' and librarians', as the enormous Google Book project begins to reshape our views of libraries and knowledge.

Our discussion today can be traced back some four years ago to a conversation on the Michigan campus, when one of our alumni, Larry Page, said he would like to digitize the University Library – an institution of some seven million volumes.

This might seem like an audacious remark from a 29-year-old, except for the fact Larry is a graduate of Michigan's remarkable computer engineering program, and the co-founder of Google.

Digitizing the entire Michigan library was a project our librarians predicted would take more than one thousand years. Larry told us Google could make it happen in six.

The University of Michigan library is among the largest in the world, and is one of the few academic research libraries that holds open its doors to the public. And we have a proven track record in digitizing materials, including several groundbreaking projects.

This standing made it all but natural for us to immediately and enthusiastically embrace an idea that can – and will – preserve the whole of printed knowledge for future generations and enable research never before thought possible.

The Google Book project was announced with great fanfare in December 2004. The crux of this project was that great library collections would now be searchable for anyone in the world with an Internet connection.

The global library was under way. It was no longer a question of "whether," but rather "how" and "when."

New technologies and new ideas can generate some pretty scary reactions, and Google Book Search has not been immune. The project, for all that it promises, has been challenged: on the editorial page, across the airwaves, and, with your organization's endorsement, in the court system.

It is this criticism of the project that prompted me to accept your invitation to speak — and explain why we believe this is a legal, ethical, and noble endeavor that will transform our society.

Legal because we believe copyright law allows us the fair use of millions of books that are being digitized. Ethical because the preservation and protection of knowledge is critically important to the betterment of humankind. And noble because this enterprise is right for the time, right for the future, right for the world of publishing, right for all of us.

The University of Michigan educates tens of thousands of students, and is home to faculty engaged in extraordinary work. We represent the citizens of Michigan and the citizens of the world. And we embody the aspirations of a society that looks to great public research universities for solutions, cures, and answers.

Those responsibilities and obligations make it abundantly clear to me, as president, that the Google project is a remarkable opportunity – and a natural evolution – for a university whose mission is to create, to communicate, to preserve and to apply knowledge.

This is, simply, what we do and why we exist.

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The University of Michigan's partnership with Google offers three overarching qualities that help fulfill our mission: the preservation of books; worldwide access to information; and, most importantly, the public good of the diffusion of knowledge.

Society turns to its universities for the printed word because books are the foundation of our institutions. Books are what the first president of Michigan called our "fixed capital," more vital than any professor, any classroom, or any laboratory.

We are the repository for the whole of human knowledge, and we must safeguard it for future generations. It is ours to protect and to preserve.

After the University of Michigan was founded in 1817, our first recorded gift was a highly regarded German encyclopedia, donated by a fur trader who believed all children should be educated. We had yet to offer our first class when it arrived from the wilds of northern Wisconsin.

We still have that ancient encyclopedia, and you can see and use it in our Special Collections Library. It is there for you because we place a premium on preserving knowledge.

The soul of scholarship is research. From the current to the ancient, we must make all information discoverable to faculty, students, and the public.

A colleague likes to say that General Motors does not need to maintain the tools for its 1957 Chevys, and would have a hard time manufacturing a car from that year. But a university is responsible for stewarding the knowledge of 1957, and for all the years before and after – the books and magazines; the widely known research findings and the narrow monographs; the arcane and the popular.

Well before Google, we were digitizing between 5,000 and 8,000 volumes every year in an effort to preserve portions of the collection. These are works that are brittle or damaged, and at risk of being lost forever.

We know that about one-quarter of the books in our general collections – more than one-and-a-half million volumes – are brittle; another 3.5 million books are at risk because they are printed on acidic paper that eventually will break down.

You will find similar situations across the country. For the first time ever, a nationwide survey has assessed how well our cultural institutions are tending to some 4.8 billion artifacts – repeat, billion – the majority of which are books held at libraries.

The University of Michigan was one of nearly 3,400 institutions that took part in this massive Heritage Health Index. And the findings that came outlast December were discouraging.

As a country, we are at risk of losing millions and millions of items that constitute our heritage and our culture, because of a lack of conservation and planning. And libraries fare the worst when it comes to dedicating resources to preservation work.

So conservation efforts are paramount. Our library at Michigan has been the national leader in creating digital copies of works that are at risk, out of print, or languishing in warehouses.

I know some of the organizations here have works represented in the journal archive called JSTOR, and I'd remind you that the University of Michigan pioneered the technology that helped make JSTOR the tremendous online resource it is today.

We were digitizing books long before Google knocked on our door, and we will continue our preservation efforts long after our contract with Google ends. As one of our librarians says, "We believed in this forever."

Google Book Search complements our work. It amplifies our efforts, and reduces our costs. It does not replace books, but instead expands their presence in the marketplace.

We are allowing Google to scan all of our books – those in the public domain and those still in copyright – and they provide our library with a digital copy. We insisted on this for one very important reason: Our library must be able to do what great research libraries do – make it possible to discover knowledge.

The archive copy achieves that. This copy is entirely, and only, for preservation and research. As for the public domain works, we will use them in every way possible. For in-copyright works, we will make certain that they remain dark until falling into the public domain.

Let me assure you, we have a deep respect for intellectual property – it is our number one product. That respect extends to the dark archive and protecting your copyrights.

We know there are limits on access to works covered by copyright. If, and when, we pursue those uses, we will be conservative and we will follow the law. And we will protect all copyrighted materials your work – in that archive.

Let me repeat that: I guarantee we will protect all copyrighted materials. I assure you we understand that providing public access to materials in copyright, particularly those still in print, would be unlawful. Merely because our library possesses a digital copy of a work does not mean we are entitled to, nor will we, ignore the law and distribute it to people to use in ways not authorized by copyright.

Believe me, students will not be reading digital copies of "Harry Potter" in their dorm rooms.

We will safeguard the entirety of this archive with the same diligence we accord our most sensitive materials at the University: medical records, Defense Department data, and highly infectious disease agents used in research.

At the same time, we absolutely must think beyond today. We know that these digital copies may be the only versions of work that survive into the future. We also know that every book in our library, regardless of its copyright status today, will eventually fall into the public domain and be owned by society. As a public university, we have the unique task to preserve them all, and we will.

As Thomas Jefferson well knew with his family fire, there are few more irreparable property losses than vanished books. Nature, politics, and war have always been the mortal enemies of written works.

Most recently, Hurricane Katrina dealt a blow to the libraries of the Gulf Coast. At Tulane University, the main library sat in nine feet of water – water that soaked the valuable Government Documents collection: more than 750,000 items … one of the largest holdings of government materials in Louisiana … 90 percent of it now lost.

In the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia decimated cultural institutions throughout the country. Khmer Rouge fighters took over the National Library, throwing books into the street and burning them, while using the empty stacks as a pigsty. Less than 20 percent of the library – home for Cambodia's rich cultural heritage – survived.

I know we cannot and should not imagine something like this happening in the U.S. But history tells us that such events have happened. The International Federation of Library Associations calls the Cambodia assault "one of the most complete destructions known in world history."

Now, with Google, the University of Michigan is involved in one of the most extensive preservation projects in world history.

Remember, we believed in this forever. We have been a leader in preservation and will continue to do so – I expect nothing less of Michigan. By digitizing today's books, through our own efforts and in partnership with others, we are protecting the written word for all time.

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Just as powerful as the preservation aspect of Google Book Search is the fact our venture will result in a magnitude of discovery that seems almost incomprehensible. I could not have imagined that in my lifetime so much diffuse information literally would be at my fingertips.

It is an educator's dream, knowing that the vast body of information held in the libraries of Michigan, Stanford, Harvard, Oxford and the New York Public Library will be universally searchable and, in the case of public domain works, accessible.

My parents were both teachers. My mother would take me and my two sisters to the public library in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and I remember it was like opening the doors to a different world with each trip we made. I was forever discovering entire new veins of titles, books that were simply enchanting to impressionable young girls.

Later on, as an undergraduate in college, I all but lived in the library. If I wasn't holed up and reading in a carrel, I was simply roaming the stacks and uncovering new subjects and ideas.

I cannot tell you how exhilarating – and how humbling – it is to know that this digital enterprise, with our university's books, will provide that same joy of discovery for people everywhere, from Iowa to Indonesia.

I understand Pat Schroeder met her future husband, Jim, while in the library at Harvard. A different kind of discovery, perhaps, but I suspect joyful nonetheless. Thank goodness everything that happens in a library isn't online!

Taking the wonders of the library to the world is actually a bit of role reversal for the University of Michigan. Our first books were purchased in Europe by one of our professors. He returned with titles that could not be found in America and which already were rare in Europe.

And now the circumstances are turned around. Those scarce books are in Ann Arbor, for users in Europe or any other continent to read.

I wish I could tell you we were always so generous with our library. In fact, we used to keep it under lock and key. It was a room open only to our Board of Regents and our faculty – the students be damned! They were allowed in once a week. Keep in mind the regents were the ones setting the rules!

Those who did use the library – and "use" is a subjective term here – needed the librarian's permission to simply touch a book. It took more than fifty years to liberalize

access to our library, and that came after the University librarian and the University president, James Angell, all but begged the regents to allow books to be circulated.

"We have to remember," President Angell said, "that the library is the great central power in the instruction given in the University, and that the books are here not to be locked up and kept away from readers, but to be placed at their disposal with the utmost freedom…"

Be placed at their disposal with the utmost freedom. That's what the technology of Google Book Search does with our books.

We live in a digital world. It is how we communicate, how we do research, and how we learn. E-mail is everyone's top activity on the web, followed closer and closer by the use of search engines.

On a typical day in the United States, 60 million adults are using an online search engine. Google, which dominates among search engines, estimates it has 380 million visitors a month. That is a staggering use of a tool that has been part of our culture for less than a decade, and still is in its infancy. It also represents a staggering opportunity.

Search engines have genuinely reshaped our world. And young people, of course, are the savviest users. They do not know any other way to work.

One of the great advantages of being a university president is I get to see the future through our students. And I can tell you, a different world is upon us.

The students who started college this past fall have always had voicemail, do not know what it means to actually dial a phone, and have no idea what to do with a bottle of white-out. "Spam" and "cookies" do not constitute cheap college food.

When students do research, they use the Internet for digitized library resources more than they use the library proper. It's that simple. So we are obligated to take the resources of the library to the Internet.

When people turn to the Internet for information, I want Michigan's great library to be there for them to discover.

Our campus is located in southeast Michigan, a region where the pains of the auto industry are particularly acute. In recent months, we've started our mornings with bold headlines announcing deep cutbacks by GM, Ford, and DaimlerChrysler – cuts designed to remake the industry for its very survival.

I was particularly struck by one Ford official's assessment of the absolute need for transformation: "Change or die," he said. Change or die.

The auto industry is learning a hard lesson, and it is not alone. New technology is disrupting all segments of our society. Newspapers and TV networks are trying to figure out how to make money with online editions. Hollywood is experimenting with simultaneously releasing movies to theatres, DVD and cable. Cell phones are ubiquitous. For better or worse, they are shaping how, when, and where we communicate.

Universities are not islands in this sea of technology. We must change with our students, and that means embracing the Internet and all it can, and does, offer.

The JSTOR archive, and a second project called the Making of America, both give powerful testimony to how digitization and the Internet can reshape scholars' access to knowledge.

JSTOR came first, as a venture involving Michigan, Princeton, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The concept seemed basic, but the outcome unknown: Digitize the backfiles of a handful of scholarly journals, and make them available on the Internet to subscriber libraries.

What began with 10 journals and some 100 libraries is now nearly 600 journals and 2,650 libraries – in ninety-eight countries.

This enterprise was the brainchild of Mellon Foundation President Bill Bowen. JSTOR, in his words, allows users to "connect and trace ideas in ways that were difficult if not impossible before."

The Making of America is equally dramatic. For those who have not used it, the Making of America is a website developed by Michigan and Cornell, using primary sources from 1850 to 1876. Funded – again – by the Mellon Foundation, we scanned and catalogued hundreds of volumes – works that sat for years in an off-site storage facility. But our librarians suspected there would be a demand for them because they cover such a rich period in American history.

The librarians were right. A collection of material that previously had been used by a campus of 40,000 was now online for all the world to see. Soon, the Making of America site was logging up to 1 million web hits a month. And we keep adding books and journals.

We continually hear from users about new discoveries and new knowledge generated by their research on Making of America.

Let me tell you just one such story. It involves the 1860 book, "Bees and bee-keeping," a seemingly obscure work that, as a printed piece, had little demand at Michigan, a

research university without an agriculture school. It has turned out to be the bible of beekeeping, with the business advice dispensed before the Civil War still perfectly applicable to today's beekeepers, who continually download the article.

The treasures unearthed through research on the Making of America site are what a Michigan librarian calls "instant gratification of a one-in-a-million need."

Using the technology of digitization and the reach of the Internet, connecting people with information creates a new demand for material that takes researchers in unexpected directions. That will expand exponentially with Google Book Search, whose technology and access will generate a new market for books, and a financial benefit for authors and publishers – from highly successful publishing houses to struggling university presses.

In its purest form, Google Book Search is a giant catalog for users to browse through. And catalogs have power. Sears-Roebuck became a retail giant because of a catalog. Amazon.com is a mega-catalog and among the top five websites in the world. And Google Book Search, with the results it provides users, is a massive, free directory to your publications.

That directory includes snippets, which I know is a four-letter word with you. But I confess I see no difference between an online snippet, a card catalog, or my standing at Borders and thumbing through a book to see if it interests me, if it contains the information I need, or if it doesn't really suit me.

So what will Google Book Search, snippets and all, do for book sales? It will whet the appetites of users and drive them to libraries, bookstores, and online retailers to buy more books. I believe we are seeing an exciting new business model unfolding, and I can't understand why any bookseller or publisher, especially scholarly presses with such narrow audiences, would oppose an approach that all but guarantees increased exposure.

It seems to me that this is a perfect fit for the objectives of AAP:

Aid publishers in exploring the opportunities of emerging technologies …

Promote the status of publishing in the United States and throughout the world …

Expand the market for American books in all media …

As a university, we share your goals because we are a publishing house ourselves. The University of Michigan Press publishes 165 titles a year, with some 2,500 titles still in print from its 75-year history.

And we have authors – a renowned faculty body producing works that range from popular novels and poetry, to high school and college textbooks.

The visibility, quality and success of books written and produced by our faculty and staff are a direct reflection on our university – we absolutely want them to succeed.

We want all scholarly communication to succeed. And that is because of the vital importance, and the integral role, that publishing plays in the academy.

At the same time, I am extremely aware of the financial plight of these presses. Many are awash in red ink and buoyed only by financial support from central administration. In any other industry, the financial model of university presses would be jettisoned.

The bottom line, for me and for you, is that our publishing houses and our authors can only benefit financially and reputationally from the widest possible awareness of books and their availability.

As universities, we also are some of the publishing industry's biggest customers, because we are insatiable consumers of information. At Michigan alone, we spend 20 million dollars a year on new books and journals for our libraries, and our acquisitions budget grows every year.

All of this activity – the online archives, the writing, the publishing, the purchasing – all of this incredible activity tells me Google Book Search will be a boon to everyone involved with the industry of books, and that includes you. It will expose researchers and casual readers alike to both the most popular and most obscure publications, from "The World is Flat" to the world of bees.

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At its essence, the digitization project is about the public good.

It transcends debates about snippets, and copyright, and who owns what when, and rises to the very ideal of a university – particularly a great public university like Michigan.

This project is about the social good of promoting and sharing knowledge. As a university, we have no other choice but to do this project.

At Michigan, we place a premium on leadership. It is in our institutional DNA to be the leaders and best.

Let me give you two quick examples.

The first comes in the wake of World War II. The Japanese occupation of the Philippines during the war claimed many victims, including the campus of the University of the

Philippines and its renowned library. Troops torched the books, destroying all but a handful of the 147,000-volume collection. The librarian of the Filipino university described this incredible loss as an "intellectual famine."

Because the University of Michigan had a long history of Filipino scholarship, we immediately went to work helping to rebuild the University of the Philippines Library. We filled box after box with books from our library, from our students, from the University of Michigan Press and from other publishing houses. And we rallied other institutions to donate books that would form a core of scholarship for Filipinos.

Over the course of seven years, more books were acquired for the University of the Philippines Library than had been collected in its 31-year history prior to the war.

Where in the 1940s we were contributing to the rebirth of Filipino scholarship, today we are taking our first steps in the higher education system of Liberia, a nation ravaged by fourteen years of civil war.

The library at the University of Liberia is in pitiful condition, with only a smattering of books and journals. Information technology and digitization are essentially non-existent.

But the library does have three computers with Internet access, and they hold the promise of learning for Liberian students and faculty. With the Google project, today in its infancy and tomorrow in its infinity, the people of Liberia will be able to access and read a tremendous body of work in the public domain. And they will be able to search millions more titles still under copyright.

This is a phenomenal, phenomenal resource that can transform a library in one of the poorest countries in the world.

At the University of the Philippines, we helped to put hundreds of thousands of books on the shelves. At the University of Liberia, we have the potential to expose millions upon millions of books to people who might otherwise never have known they existed.

Societies progress when knowledge is shared, and this extraordinary digital library is a gift to schools and colleges in developing countries.

Universities are places of deep exploration and bold experimentation. Great ideas are born on our campuses: Hewlett-Packard was born at a university, as was the artificial heart, the computer, and, yes, Google. We provide solutions for our future, and I believe

this venture with Google is one of the best answers we have to sharing knowledge on a global plane.

I have spent 45 years in higher education, from being a freshman at a small liberal arts college in Iowa, to leading of one of the premier research universities of the world. I have been involved in groundbreaking medical research, have worked alongside some of the brightest minds in academe, and have dined with Pulitzer Prize winners and Nobel laureates.

Google Book Search is the most revolutionary enterprise I've ever experienced. It has the potential to transform the flow of knowledge, and there is no greater gesture a university can make.

Let me end by taking you back to Thomas Jefferson, the library he lost in a fire, and the subsequent library he contributed for the rebirth of the Library of Congress.

He had a third and final library, and that was the one he built for the University of Virginia. That library was housed in the Rotunda, which was – and is – the focal point of Jefferson's academic village. Jefferson was an old man at the time, and the new university was his labor of love.

Thomas Jefferson would have loved Google Book Search. He believed in contemplating every possible idea. He advocated the diffusion of knowledge, and the power of universities to make that happen.

We all have heard the famous Jefferson quote: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

What most people do not know is the next sentence: "But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them."

That means preservation.

That means access.

That means the public good of education.

It means taking advantage of the latest technology and our lawful rights as book owners.

It means stepping up, looking forward, and saying: "Let's do it."

Google Book Search, with the books of the University of Michigan, makes all that possible – it takes the corpus of human knowledge and puts it in the hands of anyone who wants it.

It can, and will, change the world, and I want the University of Michigan to be part of it.