

Comments made at the University of Missouri Library Society 2025 Annual Reception

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Good afternoon. Thank you so much for inviting me to join you today. My name is Rick Barohn and I am the executive vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine.

I am a true bibliomaniac. And that is not a word in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Bibliomania is in the OED.¹ I looked it up in my 20-volume OED that I have at home this morning and it seems one of the earliest uses of the word was by Sir Walter Scott in 1816. Scott used the term in reference to Don Quixote, who he considered to be the first biblio-maniac. But today we are here to talk about libraries.

I am thrilled to be here today to celebrate *libraries* and all they do. I also looked up the English derivation of the word library in the OED. The word seems to have been used by Chaucer in 1374 in old English when he referred to lybrarye: “*The walles of thi lybrarye aparayled and wrowht with yuory and with glas*”.²

Libraries are very special places. Let me read you a wonderful passage about the special place libraries have in our lives. I came across this in a book—a REAL BOOK! Made out of paper! The book is a historical novel called “Becoming Mrs. Lewis” by Patti Callahan. It is a story about the intersecting lives of C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman, and I rate it as a good book. In it, the narrator Joy Davidman describes her experience entering the very old and very large library at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

“Libraries are sanctuaries, and the one in Edinburgh was a sacred space with its soaring ceilings and hovering lights, dropping circles of gold on to tables and floors...I stood in the middle, my neck hinged back to stare up. The Corinthian pillars and dark, scarred wooden desks beckoned me to my work. I settled in with books and pad and pen, and began to write. I exhaled with relief: Now

this is a place I could work.”³

At the medical school, we recently celebrated the reopening of the J. Otto Lottes Health Sciences Library—a space that serves not only as a cornerstone of academic support for our students, but also as a hub for collaboration and innovation. This library is not just a space where students can study or access resources—it is where ideas will take shape, where projects will begin, and where new partnerships will form between disciplines.

The new Health Sciences Library is a **contemporary** library, which looks a lot different from the library at the University of Edinburgh or our grand Ellis Library, which still retains so many features of classic libraries. This is why I, and I am sure many of us, like to escape to Ellis Library and wander through the stacks and lightly run our fingers over rows and rows of books in our favorite sections.

But whether you are in a traditional library full of books or a contemporary one with fewer volumes, the function and purpose is the same. We should be providing an environment that supports academic excellence, critical thinking, collaboration and access to information. And we need to address the evolving needs of our students and faculty.

From advanced study rooms to cutting-edge technology and online resources, libraries need to be designed to enhance learning and foster collaboration. In academic fields where advancements happen rapidly, we know that access to the most current information is essential. Good libraries will continue to be a trusted resource for high-quality information, offering a comprehensive collection of journals, textbooks and databases, many of which are now electronic rather than paper. But whether you access information on paper or electronically, libraries make these and other resources and services available to help you navigate the complex world in your field of study.

I want to tell you about one of the new services of our university library that you may not know about and that the School of Medicine team is excited to be using. This is our digital publishing capability led by Steven Pryor. Our digital publishing unit now has the software from a company called OJS that allows our students and faculty to design and publish our own journals without going through standard, large for-profit publishing houses.

Using this new library technology, in 2024 the

School of Medicine launched a new medical journal called Missouri Health. We have now published three issues, and we will be publishing a fourth soon.⁴⁻⁶ Missouri Health is primarily run by our medical students with faculty supervision. Dr. Dave Arnold, the executive director of the NextGen Precision Health initiative is the editor in chief. Fourth-year medical student Jay Devineni along with four other students work closely with Dr. Arnold and other School of Medicine faculty to produce the journals. The initial three issues published all of our students' scientific abstract presentations at various research forums on campus. This is huge, as our journal is registered in the Library of Congress and each issue has an official Library of Congress DOI number. All of these publications are indexed in Google Scholar. The students can now list these publications on their CVs and applications for residency programs and other jobs. The journal is open-access and there are no charges to publish or obtain the journal online. The authors own the copyrights to whatever they publish—not the publishing house.

As you know, most journals that are open-access charge authors to publish and many use predatory practices to entice authors—many who are junior and green at publishing—to pay to play in their predatory journals.

Missouri Health is crossing a milestone with the next issue, so that we will be publishing full-length articles authored by MU students and their faculty mentors. We are very excited to be moving from abstracts-only to complete manuscripts.

In addition, each cover of Missouri Health depicts a work of art from Mizzou's Museum of Art and Archaeology, and the students work with the museum's deputy director, Marie Nau Hunter in selecting the images for each issue. Therefore, this is a nice example of medicine and science crossing into the humanities realm.

I am very proud of this new journal, and I believe all medical schools should be creating journals like this so that students, residents and junior faculty can have an avenue to publish their research work. I also think that if every school of medicine did this, it would lessen the control that the large for-profit publishing companies have on all of us.

I should mention that the University of Missouri Digital Publishing Unit can work with any school or college so they can create their own journals. I hope the School of Medicine is just the

first at the University of Missouri to leverage this tool.

So thank you to MU Libraries and to Steve Pryor for enabling the School of Medicine to enter the exciting scientific digital publishing space.

Another service I like to remind people of is the amazing University of Missouri Libraries depository, which houses 2 million volumes for the entire University of Missouri System right here in Columbia on Lemone Blvd. This is a cavernous building, and when I toured it with our librarians, I got a chill up my spine standing in this enormous space housing a massive amount of knowledge. Any book or journal can be obtained in less than a day upon request. So while we may have fewer books on site, they are still there. This gives us more room to gather and study and think.

All good libraries are a space where you can sit by yourself and read, study and think. The J. Otto Lottes Health Sciences Library allows us to do just that in the ultra-contemporary chairs and study places. I am particularly fond of the cocoon-like study chairs with the cupola roof and reading light. I often sit in the one next to the atrium and I can see the comings and goings as I read and study and think. But, while the Health Sciences Library has contemporary furniture, it does not have the amazing art that is here in the Ellis Library. What a privilege and treat it is to visit this building and wander through the room with plaster casts of famous sculptures before or after a study session. For the more adventurous students, they can walk down the old iron and marble staircase to the lower level and into the University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology and the Museum of Anthropology.

So now, a visit to the library also allows you to gaze at Minoan artifacts from 1,200 BC or exquisite paintings from the 18th, 19th or 20th centuries. What a great stimulus this is to inspire your brain to kick into gear and come up with new ideas.

I wanted to close with a few of my favorite quotes from one of my academic heroes, Dr. William Osler.

Osler was one of the greatest physicians, who changed the practice of medicine in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was a Canadian who worked first at universities in Montreal, then Philadelphia, then Baltimore and finally in Oxford.

In addition to being a brilliant clinician and medical author, he was a library and book aficionado.

Osler said of libraries:

“The organization of a library means effort, it means union, it means progress. It does good to those who start it, who help with money, with time and with the gifts of books. It does good to the young students, with whom our hopes rest. And a library gradually and insensibly molds the profession of a town to a better and higher status.”⁷

Another Osler quote I like is focused on medical books:

“To study the phenomena of disease without books is to sail in uncharted seas. While to study books without patients, is not to go to sea at all.”⁸

And to end my comments today, this Sir William Osler quote is about what he called “library instructors.” Dr. Osler said:

“There should be in connection with ever library a corps of instructors in the art of reading, who would, as a labor of love, teach the young how to read.”⁹

I really like that quote because it emphasizes how important all of our library staff are to the success of a library, in our case, at the University of Missouri’s academic libraries.

I want to thank our vice chancellor of libraries, Kara Whatley, and all of her directors and staff, who are there daily for our students and faculty as they pursue their careers to make the world a better place and to improve the human condition—which I believe is the mission for universities. William Osler also said the two great functions of the university are to think and to teach. So we need to support and thank our university libraries, as they are one of the most important ingredients to our success.

Thank you very much for allowing this librobibliomaniac to speak to you this evening. It is a great honor.

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