

## For Immediate Release

University of Pennsylvania Libraries

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### **Penn Joins University Partnership Launching the Open Library Environment as a Kuali Foundation Project**

Philadelphia, PA

The Penn Libraries announce their participation in a multi-institutional project to create software that manages the complex business processes and workflow of academic libraries in the digital age. Organized and directed as a program within the Kuali Foundation, and known as the Kuali Open Library Environment or OLE (pronounced Oh-LAY) this initiative is a community-source effort that will transform the way academic libraries engage in and sustain the development of new information technology.

More than 300 libraries, educational institutions, professional organizations, and businesses participated in some phase of planning for the OLE project, which was supported by a planning grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and led by Duke University. Based on that broad insight, OLE will create a next-generation library system that breaks away from print-based workflows and reflects the changing nature of library resources and services.

Kuali OLE will be designed to work well with other enterprise systems and to be easily modified to suit the needs of diverse institutions. The resulting software will be made freely available to libraries, which will then contribute enhancements through community processes. The project will build on the far-reaching expertise of its current and future partners. "Penn is especially eager to be part of Kuali OLE, because we believe the time has come for universities to take greater control over the infrastructure that supports teaching and learning," says Penn Vice Provost and Director of Libraries, Carton Rogers. "This project will improve the efficiency of library operations, but more important, it will make us far more nimble at deploying new services; it will fundamentally change the way our strategic aspirations relate to technology; and it will create new opportunities for creative interaction with other libraries."

Integrated library systems, composed of relational databases and the application software that support them, are used to manage library collections, from selection to procurement to distribution. Based largely on workflows designed for a print age, these systems are increasingly inadequate for managing the vast digital resources that academic libraries handle, including the licensed content used on today's campuses and the growing collections of digitized material that libraries curate or their constituents create.

In light of the changing nature of academic content and the processes needed to deliver it, libraries need to be more proactive in software development. Alternatives for such development in the commercial sphere have been shrinking for some time, leaving many responsible for library and campus IT services to look toward community partnerships that provide libraries with sustainable technology solutions. "For this reason, the Kuali Foundation is a natural home for the OLE Project," according to Brad Wheeler, Kuali Foundation Board Chairman and CIO at Indiana University. "The design excellence and quality assurance that Kuali members have achieved through other successful systems provides the right environment for this community source project and its investors. As Rogers put it, "By broadening the Kuali tent, I'm hopeful the nation's research libraries can find new ways of pursuing shared interests, and at the same time re-envision our partnership with the commercial sector, to build a mutually beneficial technology market for higher education."

Penn's partners in the Kuali OLE initiative include Indiana University, Lehigh University; Triangle Research Libraries Network, represented by Duke and North Carolina State University, the Universities of Chicago, Maryland, and Michigan, and a Florida Consortium with the University of Florida representing: Florida International University, Florida State University, New College of Florida, Rollins College, University of Central Florida, University of Miami, University of South Florida, the Florida Center for Library Automation.

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