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Penn Libraries Partner with Kuali OLE to Develop 21st-Century Library Management Software

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has granted \$2.38 million to the Kuali OLE (Open Library Environment) project, of which the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) Libraries are a founding partner. The project's goal is to develop and freely distribute community source software designed specifically for the management of print and electronic collections for academic and research libraries worldwide.

Kuali OLE is a partnership of research libraries dedicated to managing increasingly digital research library resources and collections. Partners include Indiana University, which will lead the project, Penn Libraries, Florida Consortium (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); Lehigh University; Triangle Research Libraries Network, represented by Duke University and North Carolina State University; University of Chicago; University of Maryland; and University of Michigan.

Large academic research libraries such as the Kuali OLE partners manage and provide access to millions of items, using software to track interrelated transactions that range from ordering and paying for items to loaning materials to individuals and institutions.

"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 importantly, 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."

More than 200 libraries, educational institutions, professional organizations and businesses laid the groundwork for Kuali OLE by participating in the original OLE project, a design phase that was supported by an earlier grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and led by Duke University.



“The Mellon Foundation has a distinguished history of supporting transformative projects for education and cultural preservation,” said Brad Wheeler, Kuali Foundation board chair and vice president for Information Technology at Indiana University. “We are grateful for their support of this open, extensible and deeply collaborative work among the [Kuali] OLE investing libraries.”

Over the next two years, Kuali OLE project researchers will work to create a next-generation library system that breaks away from print-based workflows and reflects the changing nature of library materials and new approaches to scholarly work.

“The Kuali OLE collaboration comes at the perfect time,” said Deborah Jakubs, Rita DiGiallonardo Holloway University Librarian & Vice Provost for Library Affairs at Duke University. “If libraries are to provide excellent support for scholarship and teaching well into the future, we must develop a new model that reflects the true needs of our organizations and facilitates our work in a constantly changing environment. This partnership capitalizes on the experience, the commitment, and the energy of a key group of institutions to build that model for the future of research library operations. We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for recognizing the promise of the OLE project, and to Kuali for offering us this opportunity to align our goals with theirs.”

Jakubs and Wheeler were recently elected co-chairs of the Kuali OLE Board of Directors at its initial board meeting in Washington, D.C., on December 16, 2009.

The Kuali Foundation, of which OLE became an affiliated program in November, 2009, is a community of universities, colleges, businesses, and other organizations that have partnered to build and sustain community-source software for higher education. This affiliation gives Kuali OLE tremendous expertise in developing and sustaining community-based software.

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