MU police talk about new phone call alert system

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ccedf352-abc4-4a8e-827a-3038481a4b0b

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Campus police are speaking out about the MU alert system that has some people upset. An alert was sent out around 3:30 Sunday morning after an armed robbery report.

Capt. Brian Weimer with the police department said they've had several people express their frustration with the early morning phone call. It came from a number, not even police have, because it's a third party line.

Now, the biggest concern for police is making sure people don't cancel the alert system. ABC 17 News asked Weimer if they have seen an increase in people signing up for the alert or taking the alert off since the incident.

"Well, since this happened we've had some people express that they want to take it off, and that's why I want to encourage them not to, because you also realize that's how you would get information for closings and those types of things," said Weimer.

On top of the robocall, University of Missouri police sent out a text message and an e-mail.

"We are not going to use the phone service in the future unless it's something we can clearly articulate or believe that would drastically help to do that, so in the future it won't happen," said Weimer.

He said the reason behind the phone call was because of some of the people who signed up for the alert don't have text or e-mail capabilities.

"We are limited to 140 characters due to that text message and that includes spaces and everything. We can't get a lot of information in there real quickly," said Weimer.

Weimer said the alert was sent out because the suspect had a gun and was a threat to the community and wanted to get the word out as quickly as possible, in case students were in the area.
Columbia police are still looking for the suspect. The description is a tall black man in his late 20s with a heavy build.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

After recent MU Alerts, police captain says student safety is priority

Monday, April 20, 2015 | 7:38 p.m. CDT; updated 8:50 p.m. CDT, Monday, April 20, 2015
BY THERESA NGUYEN

COLUMBIA — MU Alert and the campus emergency notification system have faced criticism following attempts to inform students, faculty, staff and parents about separate criminal incidents on Wednesday night and Sunday morning.

MU Police Capt. Brian Weimer said the goal on both nights was to inform students, faculty, staff and the community quickly and accurately to keep the community safe.

"The No. 1 thing is that we’re here for student safety, and faculty, staff, and our community," Weimer said. "We’re always looking to take feedback after something like that to improve. We know we don’t have all the answers, so we’re always open."

On Sunday, MU Alert issued notices shortly after 3 a.m. through emails, text messages and phone calls about an ongoing Columbia police investigation of an armed robbery near campus. It released a statement at 4 a.m. about the investigation that included descriptions of the two suspects and advised students, staff and faculty to “take precautions.”

The first round of notifications advised people to “refer to local media” for updates. Weimer said that’s because MU police believed that local media and the MU website would be getting more information and that it was the best resource at the time.

In the 140 characters allotted for a text message, it was the best they could do, Weimer said, referring to the limits on a Twitter statement. MU Alert text messages and Twitter notices are often similar or identical.
The location of the armed robbery incident, the 1100 block of Hamilton Way, was not released in the immediate notification because police did not have that specific information yet, Weimer said. It was more important for people to know that it was happening near campus, he said.

Phone calls were employed in the notification system in Sunday morning’s incident because of concerns about getting immediate notification that people expressed after a Wednesday night emergency during which police shot and killed a man in the Hitt Street Parking Garage, Weimer said. Some people might only have access to one type of notification — text message, email or phone call.

“Listening to the community, we tried to make sure we alerted as many as people as possible in a timely manner,” Weimer said.

On Wednesday, MU Alert released a statement at 11:26 p.m. about the search for the armed robbery suspect who ultimately was shot and killed by police. According to previous Missourian reporting, the MU community was not notified until 11:40 p.m. after the suspect, Mark W. Adair, was located and fatally shot in the Hitt Street garage.

Weimer said of Wednesday night: “We probably could have been faster, but we were trying to be factual.”

The suspect was last known to have been in the downtown area, and there was nothing to indicate that he was coming to campus, Weimer said. The goal was to get the photo out and to refer the community to other outlets to get more information.

MU released a statement on Thursday apologizing for “failing to follow established protocol in alerting the MU Community in a timely manner.”

In the future, Weimer said, phone calls will not be used until police decide it would be a definite benefit to the community.

Weimer said he works closely with the MU News Bureau for many reasons. In critical situations, however, MU police determine what to put in alerts and immediate releases.

"The most important thing is that when you get that original text, email, phone call, is that you realize that there is something going on that is a lot more serious than your
typical, average night," Weimer said. "It’s not to put you in panic mode; it’s to make you more aware."

As of Monday afternoon, the latest update on MU Alert’s website about Sunday’s armed robbery remains the same statement released at 4 a.m. Sunday, which said that Columbia police were taking over the investigation. The top of the MU Alert website indicates that "the MU campus is operating under normal conditions."

**Clery release vs. MU Alert**

Meanwhile, two Clery releases were sent to university emails on Saturday citing two reports of sexual offenses involving women being approached and assaulted by a group of men near Memorial Student Union and the MU Student Center.

Weimer said those were serious crimes that police wanted to make the community aware of, but the lack of a dangerous weapon or immediate threat was a factor in not using MU Alert to report the alleged offenses.

“It’s a fine line,” Weimer said. “We don’t want this to be so prevalent that people stop using it or don’t take it seriously because they get too many of them.”

On Monday, one person was arrested in the alleged assault near Memorial Student Union.

**How to opt out**

MU uses Blackboard Connect as a third-party notification system to alert students, staff and faculty, Weimer said. Notifications are available through text message, phone calls and emails.

In previous Missourian reporting, Eric Evans, MU emergency management coordinator, said students who want those alerts must opt in to receiving text messages or phone call alerts.

To change settings for whether and how you receive alerts, log in to myZou. In the drop-down Main Menu tab on the upper left side, click on “Emergency Mass Notification.” Fill each slot, or not, to receive or reject alerts through that option.

This is the same system that notifies students, faculty and staff about campus closings, Weimer said.
Evans said in a previous Missourian article that the MU Alert system is a manual system except in cases of automated tornado warnings. MU students automatically receive alerts through their campus email, he said.

Anyone who is signed up for alerts and failed to receive them should contact the MU Division of Information Technology, Weimer said.

MU police arrest high school student for campus groping incident


COLUMBIA, Mo. - A Columbia high school student is under arrest tonight after MU police nabbed him for a groping that happened early Saturday morning near Memorial Union on campus.

Just before 1:00 this afternoon, police arrested 18-year-old Luke Kezekiya Kuol, a Hickman High School student, for his alleged role in the incident.

Police received a call about 1:20 a.m. Saturday about a sex offense that had occurred about 45 minutes earlier.

The two female victims told police while they were walking on campus multiple men approached them, grabbed them and tried to kiss them. The victims said other men joined in and groped them before running away.

Police think Kuol was involved but are not saying why and are not releasing more details. MUPD is continuing its investigation.
MU police make arrest in groping case

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Monday, April 20, 2015 at 4:23 pm

University of Missouri police arrested an 18-year-old man on suspicion of third-degree assault for allegedly being among a group that groped two women and tried to kiss them early Saturday morning near Memorial Union.

Luke K. Kuol was arrested about 12:52 p.m. and released on a summons, MU police Capt. Brian Weimer said. Kuol is a Columbia resident but not an MU student.

According to a Clery release the university sent out Saturday morning, two female students told police they were walking near Memorial Union about 12:30 a.m. when two men approached them, grabbed them and tried to kiss them before more men ran across the street to join them. The group, numbering six men in total, reportedly groped the women before a police car pulled up and scared them off, the release said.

A second Clery release went out about 6:30 p.m. Saturday after a third woman anonymously reported another incident. The woman, also a student, said she and some friends were assaulted by a similar group of men about 11:30 p.m. Friday on Rollins Street between the Student Recreation Complex and the MU Student Center.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Suspect arrested in sexual assault on MU campus

Monday, April 20, 2015 | 8:37 p.m. CDT

BY LIYING QIAN

COLUMBIA — Police arrested a man in connection with a sexual assault that occurred Saturday morning near Memorial Student Union on MU's campus.
Police arrested 18-year-old Luke Kezekiya Kuol, a Hickman High School student, around 1 p.m. Monday for his alleged involvement in the assault, according to an MU police news release.

A group of six men groped and attempted to kiss two female MU students on campus early Saturday. The men fled the scene when they saw a police vehicle.

Another woman told MUPD that she and a group of her friends were assaulted by similar individuals at about 11:30 p.m. Saturday on Rollins Street on campus.

Kuol was arrested on suspicion of third-degree assault. MUPD is investigating this incident and trying to identify all the individuals involved.

Anyone with information regarding the incidents can call MUPD Detective Sam Easley at 884-3721 or CrimeStoppers at 875-8477.

Museum of Art and Archeology Open After Leaving Pickard

The University of Missouri Museum of Art and Anthropology is back open after its 18 month closure, but you won’t be able to find it on campus.

The museum has relocated to Mizzou North, a location on Business Loop 70 West that it shares with the museum of Anthropology, which has yet to open.

The museum was moved out of its former home at Pickard Hall in September of 2013, because of radiation.

Some faculty members have expressed concerns since the move that being off campus would mean fewer student visitors.

City administrators have been supportive of the move, saying the increased parking at the new location makes it more accessible for community members.
Alex Barker is the museum's director. While he says the current location has some benefits, he hopes it will return to campus in the future.

Barker said, "I think folks in the university have agreed that at some point it would be good for the museum to return to campus so we can be more involved with the intellectual life of campus." He added, "and also serve as a conceptual and a physical gateway between the campus and the community."

The museum will now be regularly open from Tuesday to Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM, and Saturdays and Sundays from Noon to 4 PM.

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**Museum of Art and Archaeology celebrates reopening after 18-month closure**

*The Museum of Art and Archaeology is reopening its doors at its new home at Mizzou North on April 19, after an 18-month closure.*

The museum was forced to vacate its previous location in Pickard Hall in September 2013, due to residual radiation contamination from the early 1900s, when the building housed the Department of Chemistry. The unilateral decision to move the museum off-campus, made by the then-vice chancellor for administrative services, was criticized by faculty who said they were not consulted in the decision-making process.

Alex Barker, director of the Museum of Art and Archaeology, said he has mixed feelings about the move.

“Leaving (Pickard) was bittersweet,” he said. “On one hand, we had long since outgrown the space. On the other hand, we had been there for 40 years. It was a place we knew very well and loved very much.”

One of the major disadvantages of the move is the new location itself, Barker said. Pickard Hall allowed the museum to be close to students and faculty, while Mizzou North is located off campus on Business Loop 70.

“Being off campus makes it more difficult to get university students here,” Barker said. “This means it will be harder for professors to incorporate us into their classes’ curriculums.”

Rachel Harper, coordinator of the Humanities Series and Writing Center director, said areas of the university like the Humanities Series has relied heavily on the museum to teach students in the past.
“Each discussion group took a class period to go to the museum,” Harper explained. “The curators would pull items related to what we were discussing in class.”

The move has impacted several classes like the New Media and the Museum course, said freshman Lauren Langdon, who took the course last semester.

Langdon said her class spent about a third of its time at the museum last semester, even though the museum was not yet officially open for business. She said the sneak peak of the new location had its drawbacks.

“When we went to the museum, over 90 percent of the artwork was not on display so we were looking at it still in storage, which was a unique perspective,” she said. “It was a big annoyance (and) inconvenience having to catch a shuttle on the days we had class at the museum. The class always started late because inevitably someone would miss the shuttle or they would run into traffic.”

Harper said she does not plan to continue class trips to the museum due to these difficulties, and will instead offer extra credit to students who are able to visit it on their own time.

“Even that is unlikely because most of the students who take this class are first semester freshmen and many of them don’t have a car,” she said.

Harper said she is deeply disappointed that the campus has lost its one "big" museum.

“Art is a part of our cultural heritage,” Harper said. “An on campus museum is often the best way to educate students about art and art history. It is also often students’ first museum experience.”

However, Harper still plans to attend Sunday’s grand opening and encourages her students to do the same, she said.

Despite the challenges that come with the move, Barker said he is optimistic about the museum’s new home. While Mizzou North is less convenient for members of the university, its proximity to I-70 offers a more convenient opportunity for local elementary schools to make trips, Barker said.

“Like any space, there are advantages and disadvantages,” he said. “It’s both interesting and challenging working on reconfiguring the galleries.”

Barker’s optimism is not without some anticipation that the type of visitors at the museum may change.

“It’s too soon to say whether or not the overall number of visitors to the museum will change,” he said. “However, at the very least I expect the demographic profile to change. Our visitors are broken into thirds — university students, K-12 students and the general public. With this move, I expect more of a shift to the latter two categories.”
Overall, the museum expects to succeed at Mizzou North, Barker said, although he doesn’t believe this will be the last time the museum relocates.

“I certainly hope we will return to the campus someday,” he said. “The university thinks it is necessary in the long run. However, there is no space at the moment, so the move to Mizzou North allows us to stay open and accessible to the public.”

The renewed accessibility will be celebrated with the grand opening festivities on Sunday from 2-6 p.m. The ribbon cutting will take place at 3 p.m.

“It’s basically a big party,” Barker said with a big laugh. “It gives the public the opportunity to walk around and see some old and familiar faces that they haven’t seen in a while.”

Task force: Mammograms in 40s a choice, but don't skip at 50

By LAURAN NEERGAARD

WASHINGTON (AP) — Women should get a mammogram every two years starting at age 50 — and while routine screening brings little benefit in the 40s, beginning it that early should be a personal choice, a government task force said Monday.

Also, there’s not enough evidence to tell if new 3-D mammograms are the best option for routine screening, or if women with dense breasts need extra testing to find hidden tumors, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force concluded.

The draft advice issued Monday is largely a rewording of the task force's controversial 2009 recommendation that drew protests for questioning the usefulness of mammograms in the 40s. The American Cancer Society has long recommended annual mammograms starting at age 40 and while insurance usually pays for them, experts feared the dueling guidelines would confuse the public.

In reviewing its recommendation this time around, the government advisory panel is stressing that 40-somethings need to weigh the pros and cons of screening with their doctors.

Mammograms clearly can help prevent deaths but they come with trade-offs: anxiety-provoking false alarms, unneeded biopsies, and overdiagnosis, detection of tumors that never would have threatened a woman’s life.

"Screening is most beneficial for women ages 50 to 74," said task force past chairman Dr. Michael LeFevre of the University of Missouri.

Compared with biennial mammograms for average-risk women, starting at age 40 instead of 50 could prevent one additional death but lead to 576 more false alarms for every 1,000 women screened, the report calculated. Age aside, the report estimated nearly 1 in 5 women whose tumor was detected by a screening mammogram may be overdiagnosed.
On the other hand, women at increased risk because their mother or sister had breast cancer may benefit more from mammograms than the average 40-year-old, LeFevre added.

Urging that kind of personalized discussion is an important clarification, said Dr. Richard Wender of the American Cancer Society, which had sharply criticized the task force's 2009 recommendation. The American Cancer Society currently is updating its own mammography guidelines, due out later this year, to include the latest evidence on those age questions.

"Mammography is the most effective way to reduce the likelihood of being diagnosed with advanced breast cancer, and avoiding a premature cancer death," Wender said.

Monday's task force recommendation is a draft open for public comment through May 18, at www.screeningforbreastcancer.org. It also recommends:

—Women should undergo mammography every two years between 50 and 74, but more research is needed on whether to continue screening women 75 and older.

—About 40 percent of women have breasts so dense that it's more difficult for mammograms to spot cancer, and they're at higher risk of developing tumors, too. Laws in 22 states require that women be told if mammograms show dense breasts, and some suggest they consider extra testing. The task force said more research is needed to tell if adding tests such as 3-D mammograms or ultrasound exams would improve women's outcomes.

—More research also is needed to tell if newer 3-D mammograms should be used for regular breast cancer screening. The task force said it's not clear if 3-D mammograms improve survival or quality of life, or might worsen overdiagnosis.

April 21, 2015

**Colleges Respond to Racist Incidents as if Their Chief Worry Is Bad PR, Studies Find**

By Peter Schmidt

**NO MU MENTION**

College administrations react to hate crimes, hate speech, and other high-profile incidents of bias by focusing mainly on repairing their institution’s reputation, two new studies conclude.

The administrations’ responses generally paper over underlying prejudices in the campus culture, leaving the victims at risk of further harm in the future, argue the researchers, who presented the studies’ findings on Monday in Chicago, at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association.
"College presidents are willing to address the racist but rarely the racism," says a paper summarizing one of the studies, based on a rhetorical analysis of presidents’ statements in response to bias incidents.

The second study, based on interviews with members of colleges’ bias-response teams, found that most of the teams spend relatively little time on their primary stated functions — trying to educate the campus community about bias — and instead devote their efforts mainly to punishing and condemning the perpetrators of specific acts.

The teams’ emphasis on publicly responding to individual incidents serves to divert attention from broader problems of bias in the campus culture, stifling systemic change, a paper on the study’s findings says. (Neither paper is yet available online.)

The second paper says bias-team leaders, many of whom are midlevel administrators, appear to see themselves as accountable to "senior-level administrators concerned with institutional reputation" and to students and others who report bias and, often, "desire to see punishment enacted." Their dealings with targets of bias appear more focused on helping those people navigate the campus culture than bringing about cultural change, the paper says.

What’s Unsaid

The study of presidents examined public statements by 30 colleges’ chief executives in response to racial incidents over the past three academic years. It focused on speeches, or letters addressed to campus constituencies and made broadly available online, that were drafted in response to incidents that drew the attention of people beyond the campuses themselves.

The researchers’ analysis of the college leaders’ statements considered three key elements: the statements’ intended audience, how they discussed the racial incidents to which the presidents were responding, and how they discussed any constraints they were up against, such as racism in the campus culture.

In terms of their intended audience, most of the presidents’ statements spoke to the broader campus community. Several also delivered messages to the offending student or students, usually telling them they did not belong there.

The researchers cite, for example, the response by David L. Boren, president of the University of Oklahoma, to a March incident in which members of a fraternity on the campus were videotaped singing a racist anthem. He tweeted: "You are disgraceful. You have violated all that we stand for. You should not have the privilege of calling yourselves ‘Sooner.’ Real Sooners are not racist. Real Sooners are not bigots."

Few presidents’ statements publicly discussed the targeted person or group of people, says the paper by the scholars who conducted the study, Eddie R. Cole, an assistant professor of education at the College of William & Mary, and Shaun R. Harper, an associate professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania and executive director of its Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Of the 30 statements the two researchers analyzed, only 16 directly mentioned the racial incidents to which the presidents were responding, and just eight discussed the incidents in any detail, the paper says.
"We find it problematic that several of the initial responses from the presidents do not acknowledge that racism is a problem," the researchers wrote. "Instead, the presidents place attention on ‘individuals,’ ‘those students,’ or ‘those few of us’ who are outliers to the inclusive values of the campus. This approach suggests that academic leaders may be more interested in the public-relations battle than the fight against racism."

Only five of the 30 presidents’ statements made any reference to constraints at all. Among the minority who discussed the obstacles they faced, Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst acknowledged in a 2014 response to racist messages on students’ dormitory doors that "there is no easy fix" for eliminating bias and bigotry. William D. Underwood, president of Georgia’s Mercer University, discussed the challenge of moving beyond centuries of racism in his 2012 response to a flyer calling for a celebration of "White History Month."

Constraints such as a racist culture on a campus or throughout the society "have the power to make a president’s statement ineffective," the paper says.

Prejudice and Punishment

The study of bias-response teams involved extensive interviews with the leaders of such teams at 17 colleges.

Such team leaders tend to hold midlevel administrative positions, with their bias-team responsibilities added to their primary duties, the researchers’ paper on their findings says. "Simply put," it says, "team leaders often lacked the time, resources, and support to go beyond responding to incidents on a case-by-case basis."

Although most bias-team leaders saw their team’s missions as primarily educational, they often described their team’s work as serving a public-relations function, "to reassure campus communities that administrators were addressing bias." Many said their colleges felt compelled to create the teams to respond to "a perceived demand that the institution become visible in condemning bias incidents."

Although the teams were limited in their power to punish those accused of acts of bias — especially if no laws or college rules had been broken — many team leaders nonetheless discussed their activities using terms associated with criminal-justice work. They spoke of the "victim," the "perpetrator," and the "offender," and talked about holding individuals accountable for specific actions. The process by which they dealt with complaints often mimicked the procedures of campus police or judicial bodies, even in the absence of violations of the law or campus policies.

Three of the five researchers behind the bias-team study are at the University of Texas at Austin: Ryan A. Miller, director of campus climate and student engagement; Tonia Guida, a graduate student in higher-education administration; and Stella Smith, coordinator of the Longhorn Link student-support program. The other two authors are Elizabeth Medina, dean of students at Concordia University in Texas, and S. Kiersten Ferguson, a clinical assistant professor and program director for higher education at Southern Methodist University’s education school.
In the eyes of Americans without college degrees, higher education seems necessary but too expensive.

That is one of the main takeaways in a report released on Monday by the American Enterprise Institute, "High Costs, Uncertain Benefits: What Do Americans Without a College Degree Think About Postsecondary Education?"

The report was based on a survey of more than 1,500 people who lack college degrees about their perception of a college education. It echoed some of the findings of a public-opinion survey, released last week, of broader views of higher education.

People without a college degree recognize its importance, according to the new survey, with 84 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the idea that some form of postsecondary education was needed to get a good job. But survey participants didn’t necessarily think they needed a college credential themselves, with 43 percent indicating they were satisfied with their level of education.

Only 60 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that a college education was worth the cost. And the high cost of college was the top reason given for why some people do not enroll in college.

Families “feel trapped between something that’s necessary for their kids or for them, that is simultaneously way too expensive often for them to afford,” said Andrew P. Kelly, author of the report and director of the institute’s Center on Higher Education Reform, at an event on Monday to roll out the study’s findings.

Those who took the survey did not have a good understanding of how much college costs, the difference between a college’s sticker price and net price, or how higher education could affect their earnings. When asked to estimate the cost of tuition and fees at a community college nearby, about 51 percent overestimated the cost, and about 28 percent were not able to make an estimate.

Prospective students need better information on options, affordability, and return on investment, argued panelists at the event. But having and disseminating that information isn’t simple, especially if potential consumers aren’t looking for it. "If people aren’t in the market, why would they even know any of this?" asked Mark S. Schneider, a visiting scholar at the institute and vice president of the American Institutes for Research.
Mr. Schneider said one of the most important lessons of Mr. Kelly’s work was its indication that the "national addiction to the bachelor's degree" must be stopped. "It is not the only postsecondary credential that matters, it is not the only postsecondary credential that has economic payoff," Mr. Schneider said. "It’s too long, it’s too expensive, but it’s what most people think about when we say ‘postsecondary credential.’"

There are other alternatives, he said, such as associate degrees or certificates, that could make a graduate more money than the average bachelor’s-degree recipient earns.

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It Takes a University to Build a Library

April 21, 2015

By Dane Ward

NO MU MENTION

What happens to academic libraries as they slide sideways into a new world of superabundant information? What happens to their colleges and universities? The process of change is not easy. Inside Higher Ed has described recent campus conflicts regarding the future of academic libraries. Carl Straumsheim ("Clash in the Stacks") reported that several library directors at liberal arts institutions have lost their jobs. However, tensions about changing libraries are not restricted to one type of institution.

Academic libraries are undergoing a public, challenging and frequently contested transformation. The change and obsolescence of academic libraries as we know them represents an event of unprecedented magnitude in higher education. Rarely has a core institutional activity faced such formidable prospects for change.

At the same time, librarians will be unsuccessful in planning for the future on their own. They possess much expertise about libraries, but less about trends in research and curriculum. Moving forward, the process of recreating the library must be one that involves many people in many roles on campus.

The library as a collection of print books and journals is an idea that has left the building. The library -- if that is even the appropriate name for what seems to be
emerging -- is no longer focused exclusively on organizing and providing access to information. The library is fast becoming a multifaceted center designed to support a wide variety student learning and faculty research activities.

Many libraries in institutions focused on undergraduate education now include spaces where students find a one-stop learning environment that incorporates writing assistance, tutoring and multimedia production, as well as institutionally unique centers focused on civic engagement, multicultural dialogue or service learning.

Many libraries in research institutions provide expertise and specialized technologies to support the work of faculty. Areas of emphasis might include data management and visualization, scholarly communication and institutional repositories, the mining of humanities texts, and geographic information systems, to name a few.

By default, much of the responsibility for adapting to a changing information environment seems to fall to library directors who forge ahead at their own risk. Straumsheim quotes Bryn I. Geffert, college librarian at Amherst, as saying that directors need a high degree of “social smarts” to navigate the rapids of change.

To my way of thinking, three smarts stand out. The first involves understanding the complex and ambiguous decision-making processes of higher education. It is no surprise that decision making in colleges and universities is frequently characterized as organized chaos. Recognizing invested stakeholders is not as easy as it would seem. This is not a top-down environment. And every institution is somewhat different.

Second, working with complexity: after 20 years of experience and research, I have come to appreciate that university processes succeed best when leaders promote interactions that permit the academic community to learn its way forward to a common understanding of what can and should happen. Complexity theory suggests that effective leaders do not predetermine the outcomes of change initiatives; they create the conditions whereby the community can engage them and take steps forward.

Third, library directors must approach library change with humility. In their efforts to create conditions for campus engagement, they are the stewards of the process, not its owners. As stewards and facilitators of the process, they don’t have the answers; they offer possibilities. While they may be experts in academic library trends, librarians and directors are not necessarily experts in how those trends fit into the institutional community, curriculum and culture.

One of the hazards of organizational change is presuming that it should take place in a certain way. The future is a collective production based on many factors. Colleges and universities are communities of people with various commitments, interests and activities that intersect with libraries and information services. What we can do is open up opportunities for discussion, collective dreaming and actions.

However, the issue of library change goes far beyond the personal attributes of library directors. Our institutions will not succeed if large-scale change relies on individuals. Sure, someone needs to lead the charge, but meaningful change doesn’t occur because of one person; it requires widespread engagement, not merely acquiescence. College
and university administrators and faculty -- across disciplines -- must recognize their own interests in this change.

This leads to my central point. It will take a university community to shape a future library that meets the specific needs of learning and research at that institution. This transition is not just about libraries. It is about how colleges and universities come together to solve a collective challenge. Libraries cannot puzzle out their future alone. The library is only as effective as its ability to understand and support the emerging information needs of its campus. Beyond organizing and providing access to information, academic libraries are now incorporating a variety of nontraditional resources, services and expertise. But what exactly will change, and how fast, is a campus conversation.

I am reminded of Harold Howe’s statement: “What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it feels about education.” The two are connected. Libraries are changing. Education is changing. How academe responds to the transformation of libraries says a lot, not only about its view of libraries and education, but also about its capacity to address institutional change. The university’s engagement in library change might be considered a barometer of its ability to respond to other change as well.

But how can we, and our institutions, establish strategies that promote strategic responses to changes in the social and economic conditions that surround us? How can we work collaboratively and intentionally, bringing our expertise to bear, taking risks in order to do what higher education is called to do: to lead social and culture change that makes a positive difference in the world?

I’ve come to believe that the issues we face in our current institution are the same ones that we face wherever we go. Greener grass is not the issue. Working with the grass that we have is. Wendell Berry reminds us that meaningful work and life results from our commitment to place, to nurturing our communities.

At a very basic level, we must care about the institution, about the people we work with and about the library. The future of libraries, and academe generally, requires us to learn our way forward together as a community. There are no easy answers, only our commitments, our skills and patience with each other as we find our way into the future.

The future of our libraries is our own future. Higher education is at a turning point, with libraries as one of the most visible signs of change. How we choose to recreate libraries may be a reflection of how we adapt to changing and critical social, political, economic and environmental issues throughout the world.