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Barbara J. Ford to Retire from the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library

Urbana, Illinois—April 16, 2014—Barbara J. Ford, director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs and Mortenson Distinguished Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library since 2003, is retiring from the University at the end of May 2014. The Mortenson Center has worked with more than 90 countries over two decades to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace primarily through professional development programs. Ford has led the Mortenson Center as it expanded its activities in developing library professionals worldwide. She has also worked with library and campus colleagues at Illinois, as well as librarians around the state of Illinois and the world, to showcase the work that is done in libraries and to provide opportunities to learn from and share with librarians globally.

The American Library Association (ALA), Chinese American Librarians Association, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have recognized Ford with awards for her significant contributions and dedication to international librarianship. Both Illinois Wesleyan University and the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science have given her distinguished alumna awards.

“In leading the Mortenson Center for more than 10 years, Barbara has touched the lives of thousands of librarians around the world. She built and strengthened ties to colleagues in the Library, around the campus, and throughout the globe as she worked tirelessly to bring access to learning opportunities to colleagues to whom they would otherwise not have been available. Her passion, energy, and creativity have taken the Mortenson Center to new heights in its second decade and set a high bar for its work in the coming years,” said Paula Kaufman, Mortenson Center librarian and former dean of libraries and university librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “I, and many others, will miss her daily presence both professionally and personally.”

The author of many publications and presentations, Ford has traveled around the world to address topics such as information literacy, government information, the future of libraries, the role of library associations, international cooperation, library and professional development, among other topics. Her career has combined her interests in libraries and their service to communities and individuals, and international activities.

Ford was the 1997-1998 president of the ALA; her theme was "Libraries: Global Reach, Local Touch." She was president of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of ALA, from 1990-1991. From 2005-2009, she served as an elected member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Governing Board. She previously served as the secretary for the IFLA Section on Government Information and Official Publications and on the IFLA Academic and Research Libraries Section. From 2011-2013 she served on the U.S. National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Ford previously worked as assistant commissioner for central library services at the Chicago Public Library, executive director of the Virginia Commonwealth University libraries, and associate library director at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She served in several capacities at the University of Illinois at Chicago,

including documents librarian and audiovisual librarian. In addition, Ford was director of the Soybean Insect Research Information Center at the Illinois Natural History Survey and a Peace Corps volunteer in Panama and Nicaragua.

She earned a bachelor's degree in history and education from Illinois Wesleyan University, a master's degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and a master's degree in library science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Ford plans to continue her work with libraries and international issues.

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The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library holds more than thirteen million volumes, more than 120,000 serial titles, and more than nine million manuscripts, maps, slides, audio tapes, microforms, videotapes, laser discs, and other non-print material. The University Library is ranked highly nationally and globally, and its collections and services are used heavily by students, faculty, and scholars. More than one million items are circulated annually, and many more are used on site and virtually from anywhere in the world. For more information, please visit www.library.illinois.edu.