Indiana State Normal School opened its doors in 1870. In 1873, the first institutional library resulted from a gift from Chauncey Rose, a local railroad baron and early benefactor of the community, for the purchase of books for the library. The first library collection was housed temporarily in the President’s office in the old main administration building. Within five years, a library of 1900 volumes was assembled. In 1888, the building of the Indiana State Normal School with all its contents, including the library, was destroyed by fire. A new building was erected and three rooms were designated for library use. Over the next five years, the collection grew to more than 5,000 volumes classified under the new Dewey Decimal system, and our first card catalog was produced.

In June 1890, Arthur Cunningham became the first appointed librarian of the Indiana State Normal School. In 1893, additional space was assigned to the library, which provided the most modern freestanding steel stacks with adjustable shelves. The décor was classical, modeled after Raphael’s work in the Vatican’s Camera Della Segnatura. The library increased its serials subscriptions to 200 and acquired about a thousand volumes each year. By 1904, the school was reported to have one of the best “pedagogical collections” in the nation.

Cunningham’s greatest enterprise was the school’s first library building, which was dedicated in June 1920. It was a Renaissance style finished by Italian artisans, complete with a grand staircase and stained-glass dome. By 1933, the collections numbered 120,000 volumes and had outgrown the library’s original capacity. Still keeping up with the latest advances, the first electronic charge-out machines were installed in 1939. A year later, students were introduced to microforms for the first time. A new Teaching Materials department was created in 1944 in an attempt to support the institutions priority program for teachers and adjust to increased demands. A library addition was completed in 1957 and the main building was remodeled at the sacrifice of the grand staircase and stained-glass dome.

In the fall of 1958, Fred Hanes, the new Director of Libraries, expanded services to evening and weekend hours, increased the collections to 200,000 volumes and 800 periodicals, set up a reserve system, made the library a repository for government documents, and organized a nuclear rare book and special collections program.
In 1965, the name of the school was changed from Indiana State College to Indiana State University and, during that year, the library was named the Cunningham Memorial Library in honor of Arthur Cunningham, former librarian.

In February 1968, the Science Library became the first branch library on campus. The collections doubled in size in the 60s, and a new building was constructed and opened on January 11, 1973.

Dr. Ronald G. Leach was appointed Dean of Library Services on July 14, 1980. That same year, database-searching services were first offered. The library finished reclassifying the collection from Dewey Decimal to Library of Congress in preparation for the integration of an online computerized library system, and retrospective conversion projects began. A University Archivist was hired; a Faculty Word Processing Center opened; and a Remote Storage area was established in Normal Hall, the old library building. LUIS, the online catalog, became available to the public in Mach 1985. The library also started subscribing to information databases and CD-ROMs, and a student word processing room was opened.

In 1986-87, Rose-Hulman and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods libraries and the University School collections were added to the main library database, creating the first level of a local network. Rare Books and Special Collections finished its remodeling of its temperature and humidity control. Dean Leach worked with other library directors and the Indiana Higher Education Commission to develop the “Plan for University Library Automation in the State of Indiana,” which would result in the electronic linkage of the major university library collections. Twenty-five public terminals were added in the fall of 1989, many with printers.

As part of the State University Library Automation Network (SULAN), the library received a grant to install the first phase of the ISU NOTIS Cluster, allowing ISU to extend its online system to the University of Southern Indiana and Vincennes University. Plans were underway to install a local area network (LAN) in the library to connect library faculty PC workstations. A new Employee Orientation Program was established, as was a joint professional/support staff development committee. In 1991, the DION (Diversity Information Online) database was created by library staff to reflect campus activities relating to diversity. The library set up a CD-ROM network to provide indexes to journal articles. LUIS is included in a campus wide accessible CD-ROM network, and patrons had access to the online catalogs of Indiana University, Purdue University and Ball State University.

In October 1992, a LIBNET Resource Team was charged with active outreach to university faculty and other members of the academic community to provide informational and instructional support in the use of electronic information resources. In November, “TELLus” allowed patrons to enter messages or suggestions to the library. In January 1993, the library installed an 800 number for use by off-campus students needing reference assistance and document delivery.

Two major projects were completed in 1992/93: the integration of the Library Science and the University School libraries in Cunningham Memorial Library. In August 1993, the card catalog was removed.
In November 1993, Provost Richard Wells created the combined position of Associate Vice President for Information Services and Dean of Library Services (AVP/DLS), and Dr. Ronald Leach was appointed to this new position. This resulted in the Library, Computing Services and Facilities, and Telecommunications becoming collectively known as Information Services.

The library expanded its resource sharing efforts by implementing an agreement with the Vigo County Public Library that allowed access to each other’s online catalogs at either location. A Library Home Page was developed and linked to the University Home Page. The library began the process of converting its operating software to a faster, more efficient system. A multi-media library faculty position was created to address the exciting and emerging kinds of information available in varied electronic formats. Periodicals subscription costs escalated, the library cancelled several titles but, to offset the loss of titles, the library provided electronic access to periodicals.

During 1996/97, a newly designed and custom-made Information Desk was installed with an ADA design. Several substantial changes in infrastructure of hardware and software were initiated. Sound capability was added to all public workstations, and public laser printing services were installed. Images of significant documents from Rare Books and Special Collections were scanned and made available worldwide.

In February 1997, Ellen Watson replaced Ronald Leach as Associate Vice President for Information Services and Dean of Library Services. Cross-functional committees were formed with staff from computing, telecommunications and the library to jointly work on and resolve common issues. A toll-free reference support was implemented at the Information Desk.

The Cunningham Memorial Library celebrated its 25th anniversary on March 18, 1998. Later that year, Dean Watson initiated a plan to move Information Services toward a team-based environment. A great deal of training and staff development opportunities were undertaken to assist with the smooth transition to the new environment. In order to utilize the Internet and World Wide Web capabilities the search began for a new Library Management System to replace NOTIS. In 2000, the library completed its migration to the Voyager online system. The new system provided a great deal of options for the technical processing and tracking of materials, generating of reports, and accessing of materials for the public and was accessible via the Internet. Work began on making the library a wireless environment and several collaborative workstations were installed as an experiment to allow for team projects and group work.

In February 2001, Ellen Watson resigned and Betsy Hine assumed the additional responsibilities of Interim Dean of Library Services. Dr. Richard Antonak, in Academic Affairs, was appointed Interim Associate Vice President for Information Services. In fall 2001, the library provided the infrastructure and acquired wireless equipment for patron checkout; generated several streaming media programs to be used for instruction and PR; and conducted a “welcome fair” for new and returning students in fall 2001.

In September 2001, the Public Relations Team introduced an event called “Welcome Back to the ISU Library” to begin the new academic year by introducing students to the library,
which was warmly received on campus. The same format was followed in 2002, with more than 700 gift bags being distributed, plus hundreds of bags of cookies both during and after the gift bags ran out. Features added to the format for the 2002 event, using the theme “Passport to The World,” included showing students how to use various library databases and offering games and prizes to the campus community. The 2002 event was advertised in the Indiana Statesman, promotional posters were distributed, and news coverage was provided by local television station WTWO. This event was deemed an overwhelming success.

The Lending Services-Circulation area was rearranged in fall 2002 in order to be more responsive to patrons. A library newsletter that highlighted new and ongoing services was prepared and mailed to all faculty. Also in 2002, the Systems Team created and set up 3 collaborative workstations in the Reference area, and developed a digital streaming media workstation model, a multi-application research workstation model, and a "kiosk" station. This team also assumed responsibility for the public computer laboratory in the library which was formerly run by Information Technology. Another technological accomplishment in 2002 was the digitization of the Eugene V. Debs collection of pamphlets by the Rare Books and Special Collections Team. The Reference Team began downsizing its paper collection of reference materials in 2002 to make room for the collaborative workstations, for construction of a coffee shop, and for an expanded browsing collection of periodicals, CDs, DVDs, and video games.

In April 2003, Myrna McCallister was selected as the new Dean of Library Services, with Betsy Hine, who had served as Interim Dean, returning to the Associate Dean position and then back to Head of Cataloging and Alberta Comer, Head of Circulation, became Associate Dean. With this change in leadership, a number of changes within the library were begun. One major area of change was organizational. The library moved from a structure based on multi-layered, overlapping teams directed by team leaders, to a more streamlined departmental style. Many work units were re-aligned or merged to facilitate efficiency of workflow and departments were formed, led by department heads. Multiple layers of supervision within the new departments were reduced. Another area of change was in the library’s appearance and offerings, especially on the first floor. The addition of soft, comfortable seating in a bright red accent color on the first floor, digital games, and a wide selection of music on CD, movies on DVD, and graphic novels, along with the new Coffee Shop which opened in October 2003, worked together to increase traffic into the library.

The library also changed in significantly increasing its campus and community outreach by providing outstanding activities and event programming on a larger scale than in previous years. More than 1,000 special events or meetings took place in the library in academic year 2003 /04. One event that was upgraded in 2003 was the welcome back to campus effort, renamed the Fall Extravaganza. This welcome-back event for students, staff, and faculty proved to be a rousing success and over one-fifth of the campus attended. The entire library staff, including administrators, librarians, support staff, and student workers, contributed extraordinary amounts of time and effort to the success of this event, which showcased selected new databases and services, highlighted the new collections of CDs, DVDs, and games, provided free hot
dogs, chips, soft drinks, and live music, and offered numerous significant prizes to attendees.

On another level, Wabash Valley Visions & Voices, a digitization project focusing on historical and cultural material, offered the library an outstanding opportunity for community engagement. The ISU Library and its partners decided to embark on a collaborative digitization project. On May 20, 2004, interested parties met to discuss the formation of a consortium. The founding members of Wabash Valley Visions & Voices were: Eugene V. Debs Museum, Indiana State University Archives, Indiana State University Communications & Marketing Department, Indiana State University Library, the Native American Museum, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology Logan Library, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College Library, the Vigo County Historical Society, and the Vigo County Public Library. ISU Library purchased a CONTENTdm license for 32,000 objects and prepared server space to accommodate the project. Paul Asay designed an interim web interface for the project. The DTF selected postcards for digitization from the library’s Eugene V. Debs collection. The Special Collections Department scanned material and provided the Catalog Department with information for metadata creation. Librarian Cinda May and support staffperson Carol Vanatti were moved from Cataloging to be in charge of this and other digital initiatives as a separate unit.

2004-2005 saw an increase in both the number of visitors to the library and in the number of items checked out, a reversal of what many academic libraries are experiencing. The library saw a 15% increase in patrons entering the library and a 23% increase in the number of items checked out. ILL borrowing increased 10% over the previous year. During 2004-2005, reference librarians gave 400 presentations on how to conduct research, how to use various databases, and how to access library materials and services to 7,500 attendees. Reference staff also answered more than 250 reference questions per week.

Providing support to the community as well as to ISU constituents in 2004-2005, the library developed several community initiatives and programs including weekly programs on the Internet for residents of the Westminster Village Retirement Community. Numerous programs were offered to both the ISU community and the citizens of the greater Terre Haute area, including previews of the films “Forgiving Dr. Mengele” by Eva Mozes Kor and “Hometown: A Journey through Terre Haute, Indiana” by Tom Roznowski. Each of these two events had attendance in excess of 400 people and attracted representatives of all local and regional media.

More physical changes to the library occurred in 2004-2005, some of which included the installation of a new circulation desk, the move of the Acquisitions/Serials Department from first floor to the lower level, and the movement of the current periodicals collection from lower level to the first floor. Teaching Materials was eliminated as a department and all the non-print items were re-classified from Dewey to LC and moved into the general stacks, inter-shelved with the circulating collections. More than 7000 items were handled in this change. Other organizational changes were to combine Instruction and Reference and all Instruction Librarians were moved to the 1st floor reference area. Reference/Instruction Librarians also began increased activity in collection development, all working more closely with assigned departments or colleges and respective library representatives from those areas. In April 2005, during one of its many community outreach programs, the library’s browsing area was turned into the city of Paris for the “April in Paris” day for 260 Vigo County high school students studying French.

In 2005-06 a new reference desk was installed and the former reference desk area was walled off into a “Reference/Instruction Suite.” The Wabash Valley Voices and Visions that was
begun in 2003/04 had a formal “unveiling” with the partners at that time all contributing their own particular parts of the project under the directorship of Cinda May. The initiative won the Indiana Library Federation Collaboration Award in this report year. The library held its first book sale which turned out to be quite popular and that became an annual event. An increasing number of public events were held in the library including films, discussions, poetry readings, middle and secondary school group programs, and recognitions. The Student Friends of the Library hosted the second annual murder mystery event and again sold out. In addition to bringing more people into the library an increasing number of outreach programs were initiated including library staff going to Westminster Village, 14th & Chestnut Community Center, and CANDLES Museum.

In 2006-07 there were many staff changes as faculty and staff resigned or retired. In September Dean McCallister went on administrative leave and Associate Dean Alberta Comer became Acting, and then Interim, Dean. Also during this year the Government Documents unit was combined with the Cataloging Department which moved from the 1st floor to the former Government Documents area. Government Documents Library Kathy Gaul was moved to Reference/Instruction. A second ISU Writing Center was opened in the library, the first one housed in Root Hall in the English Department. Walls were taken down between the public area on the 1st floor and the former Technical Services/ILL areas and between Circulation and the hallway into the Administrative Area. The old Technical Services area was used regularly for events and also housed the Writing Center. The University Archives changed its reporting line from Administrative Affairs to the Library.

In 2007-08 additional moving happened on the 1st floor, coordinated by the newly formed Building Committee. There was a permanent Events Area set up, Writing Center was moved to the former Browsing area and Media Viewing Room, current periodicals and some microforms were moved to the Basement level, a new Browsing Area was set up and re-labeling and re-arranging Browsing Media began.