

UC Berkeley School of Information Management and Systems (SIMS)
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Hello. I'd like to thank the student body for asking me to speak today.

Many years ago I was driving my mother and my kids to see the movie "The Lion King". My mother was at a stage of Alzheimer's where reality and fantasy become one big poetic blur. I asked her how things were going inside her head; she was quiet for a moment, and just when I thought she had missed the question entirely she looked straight at me, and in a matter-of-fact tone said "My marbles, they've all rolled away."

At SIMS our job is to keep marbles together. We learn the tools needed to skillfully save and retrieve data. Because this is a new program with an exciting future, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about our mission and core values. I come from a family of journalists, where, as H.L. Mencken once said, our mission is to "Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Nearby on campus is the Goldman School of Public Policy, whose slogan is "Speaking truth to power." This campus is world-reknown for keeping the flame of Free Speech alive during a difficult time. Why are *we* here?

We have the distinction of being the *second* class of U.C. Berkeley students to graduate from this building having started in one century and finishing in the next. The student tour guides describe us as "The newest program on campus in the oldest building on campus." This is only partially true. Our roots began soon after the First World War when this was established as the Department, then later the School, of Librarianship. From 1976 through 1995 it was the School of Library and Information Studies, which included a broad range of courses similar to today's SIMS. If we are to truly take a leadership role in this new field I would suggest that SIMS must endorse a clear and progressive set of core values. This program embodies much more than powerful search engines and user-friendly interfaces. Since our roots lie in librarianship, perhaps we can look there for guidance. Librarianship is a profession emphasizing public service and open access to information. We could do worse than begin with these goals.

These are truly wondrous times, but the eternal struggle between private greed and social need continues unabated. The commodification of information is the contested terrain that we face in this new millennium. Almost all of the stock photographs in the world are now owned by two companies, Corbis and Getty One. Consumer data is routinely bought and sold with little regard for personal privacy. Even genetic codes, the mother of all life data, are now corporate currency. These are but a few examples of the ethical challenges we will have to deal with in the years to come. **Whose information? Managed for what purpose?** These are the questions we must not be afraid to ask. Information management can be an honorable and proud profession. It is up to all of us here to make it so.

Thank you.