

Make the Most of Your Milestone

Turning a Centennial Anniversary into a Season of Celebration

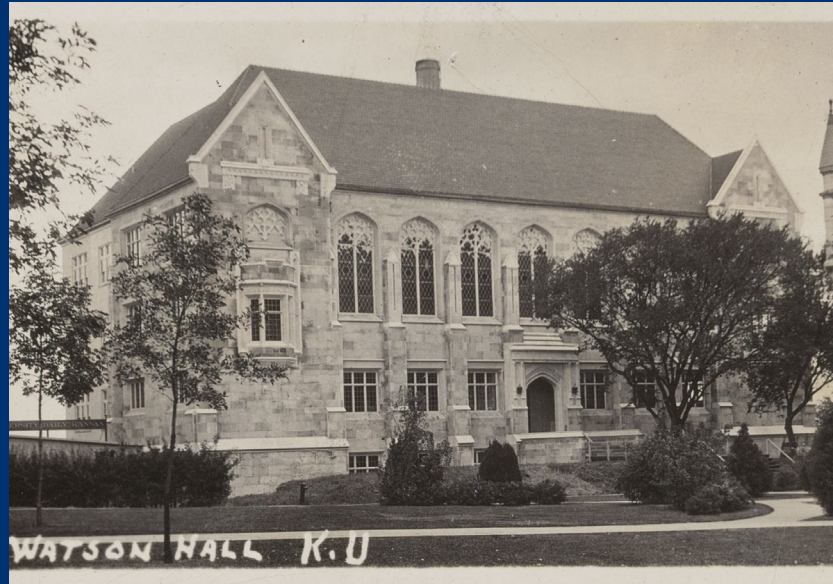
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Breaking it Down

- **The Opportunity:** Celebrating an Icon
- **The Strategy:** Setting Realistic Goals and Assessing Resources
- **The Storytelling:** Creating and Collaborating
- **The Events:** Engaging our Communities
- **The Results:** Realizing Unexpected Rewards

The Opportunity: Celebrating a KU Icon



Watson Library: A brief history

- Built in 1924
- Located on Jayhawk Boulevard, atop Mount Oread
- Named for Carrie Watson

The Strategy: Setting Realistic Goals and Assessing Resources

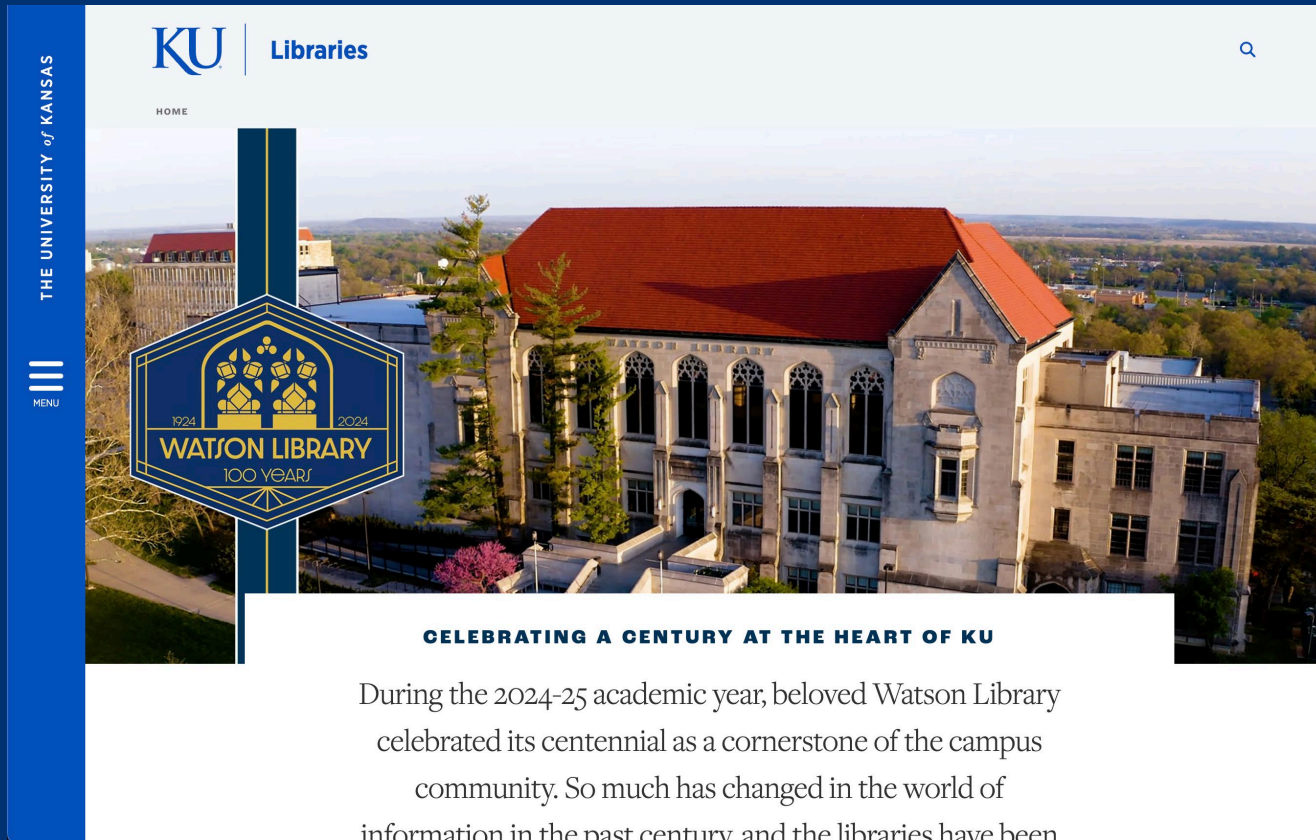
- Seize the opportunity to build awareness and community support
- Start early – but not too early
- Know your potential and your limits
- Dream big and envision an ambitious plan
- Build around a theme and create a visual identity
- Invite collaborators and champions

The Storytelling: Low Cost, High Impact

Digital. Visual. Experiential.

- Storytelling strategy built around three channels, each reinforcing the others
 - Most required more creativity than budget
 - Together these elements built a narrative

Building a Foundation: The Watson 100 Web Hub



- Feature stories
- Scrolling timeline
- Immersive content
- Events calendar

Not just a landing page, but a launch pad.

lib.ku.edu/watson100

Four Stories, A Century of Character



The hub anchored four deep-dive feature stories:

- Founding librarian **Carrie Watson**
- Evolution of the **building** itself
- **Campus Life** in the 1920s when Watson first opened its doors
- **Library Leaders** who shaped the institution across 100 years

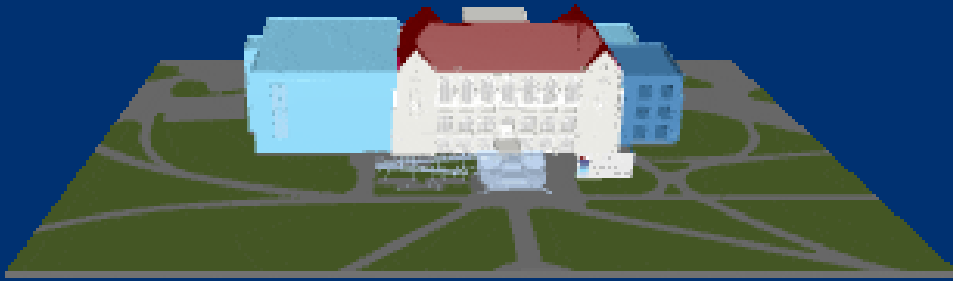
More than press releases, these were narratives

Start with Identity



Brand work began 15 months before the centennial year — and the visual identity was locked a full year in advance. Art Director Nikki Pirch developed dozens of options before arriving at a look that evoked the era, leaned into art deco, without tipping into Gatsby-era gloss.

Bringing the Building to Life: Digital Storytelling



A scrolling interactive timeline brought 100 years of Watson's evolution to the screen. A student-built 3D model visualized how the building grew and changed across a century.

These were conversation starters as much as content pieces, shareable and accessible well beyond campus.

Bringing History into Physical Space



Physical storytelling took multiple forms:

- Used existing gallery space to display the timeline from the web along with a pop-up "Life on Campus in the 1920s" installation.
- Historical banners reflecting the feature stories and other elements in and around Watson served as ambient storytelling for every passerby.
- Spencer Research Library's University Archivist created a companion exhibit using primary materials from the collections.
- A traveling exhibit — Highlights by the Hundreds — extended the story beyond campus walls and served as a precursor to the full centennial programming.

Earned Media & Community Amplification

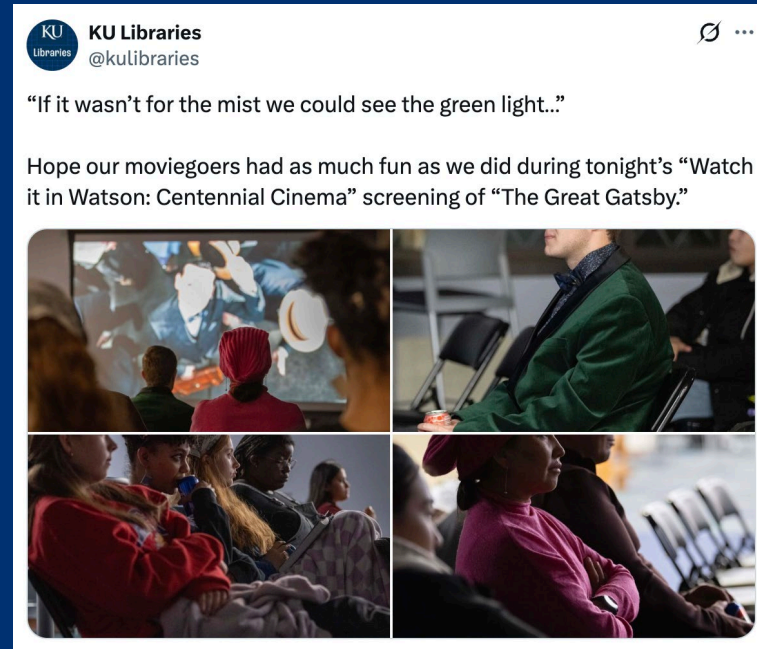
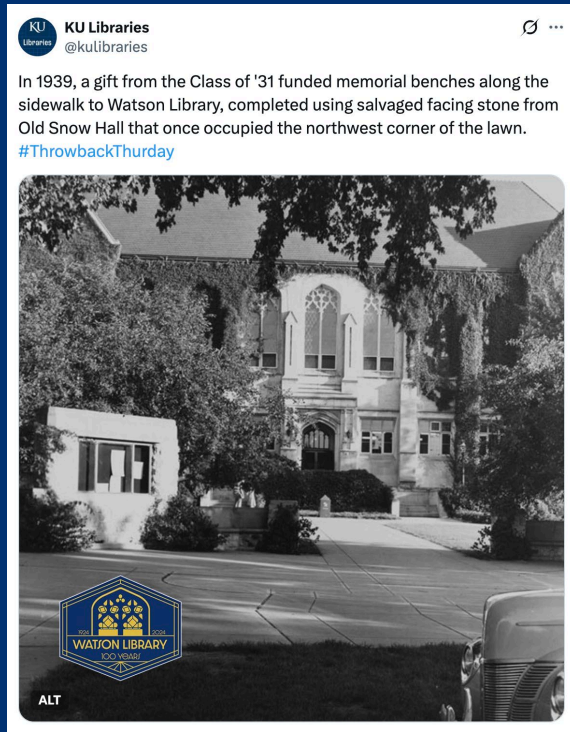


Media outreach put the centennial story in front of broader audiences.

- KU Libraries Dean Carol Smith appeared on KLWN 1320 AM's According to the Record and KPR to discuss the celebration.
- Partnership with student radio station KJHK helped engage campus around a student-centric event.
- The alumni magazine helped reconnect graduates with Watson's history — a key step in building philanthropic momentum.
- September 2024 was officially proclaimed "Watson Library Month" by the Kansas Governor.



Social Media & Broader Channels



Social media carried the daily rhythm of the centennial — connecting the web hub content, events, and alumni engagement to a wider audience. A happy birthday video brought warmth and shareability to the milestone moment.


"When You Start There, You Feel Inspired"



A strong storytelling foundation does more than inform — it activates imagination. Building the web hub, the visual identity, and the feature stories gave the whole team a richer understanding of what they were celebrating. That understanding enriched every brainstorm, every event concept, and every donor conversation that followed.

Story first. Everything else builds from there.

The Events: Engaging our Communities



**CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
CALENDAR**

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>HAWK WEEK WATSON LIBRARY OPEN HOUSE AUGUST 26 10 A.M. - 2 P.M. WATSON ENTRANCE Jayhawks can explore library resources, play games, and win centennial swag. The library will offer short, guided tours of the building at the top of each hour.</p> <p>OUT A RUG: 1920s DANCE LESSONS AUGUST 27 6-8:45 P.M. WATSON 3 WEST Step back in time and learn the iconic Charleston, the dance craze of the 1920s. Beginners to experienced dancers welcome. Spots are limited and you must register in advance to attend.</p> <p>WATCH IT IN WATSON: CENTENNIAL CINEMA AUGUST 28 7:30-10 P.M. WATSON 3 WEST Join us for a screening of "Chicago," an Academy Award winning musical comedy set in 1924. Prior to the screening, make your own 1920s Popper Head piece with help from a pop-up KU Libraries Makerspace. Enjoy popcorn and refreshments, all free to KU students, faculty, and staff.</p> <p>OUT A RUG: 1920s DANCE LESSONS AUGUST 29 6-8:45 P.M. WATSON 3 WEST Step back in time and learn the Foxtrot, a favorite across dance floors of the 1920s. Beginners to experienced dancers welcome. Spots are limited and you must register in advance to attend.</p> <p>MAKERSPACE OPEN HOUSE AUGUST 30 11 A.M. - 2 P.M. ANSCHUTZ 203A-C Learn about the space and the tools available, including 3D printing and podcasting equipment. Write a message for students 100 years from now or share thoughtful notes that reflect our current era and your vision for the future. Submissions will be considered for inclusion in the Watson Centennial Time Capsule.</p>	<p>OUT A RUG: 1920s DANCE LESSONS SEPTEMBER 10 10:10-10:45 A.M. WATSON 3 WEST Step back in time and learn the iconic Charleston, the dance craze of the 1920s. Beginners to experienced dancers welcome. Spots are limited and you must register in advance to attend.</p> <p>OUT A RUG: 1920s DANCE LESSONS SEPTEMBER 12 10:10-10:45 A.M. WATSON 3 WEST Step back in time and learn the Foxtrot, a favorite across dance floors of the 1920s. Beginners to experienced dancers welcome. Spots are limited and you must register in advance to attend.</p> <p>100th BIRTHDAY CAKE SEPTEMBER 19 11 A.M. ANSCHUTZ LIBRARY</p> <p>RHAPSODY IN JAYHAWK BLUE: THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF WATSON LIBRARY SEPTEMBER 19 6-9 P.M. WATSON FOURTH FLOOR This invite-only event features a distinguished guest speaker, remarks by esteemed leadership, and a seated dinner for libraries donors. The KU community will come together to honor 100 years of Watson Library's rich history and impact on generations of Jayhawks.</p> <p>ART ON THE LAWN SEPTEMBER 25 4:30-6 P.M. WATSON LAWN Capture the beauty of Watson Library through a guided art lesson. All skill levels are welcome to create a finished acrylic painting on canvas through a step-by-step process. Art supplies are provided. Spots are limited, and you must register in advance to attend.</p>
<p>OCTOBER</p> <p>LIBRARY EMPLOYEE REUNION OCTOBER 15 4:30-8 P.M. WATSON 3 WEST Past and present KU Libraries employees will be invited to reconnect at a happy hour event.</p> <p>LIBRARY ON THE LAWN OCTOBER 23 2-5 P.M. WATSON LAWN Enjoy an afternoon of lawn games, food trucks, and live music from local bands in collaboration with KUJFK. Activities for all ages!</p>	<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>ART ON THE LAWN NOVEMBER 6 3-4:30 P.M. WATSON LAWN Capture the beauty of Watson Library through a guided art lesson. All skill levels are welcome to create a finished acrylic painting on canvas through a step-by-step process. Art supplies are provided. Spots are limited, and you must register in advance to attend.</p> <p>WATCH IT IN WATSON: CENTENNIAL CINEMA NOVEMBER 12 7:30-10 P.M. WATSON 3 WEST Join us for a screening of "The Great Gatsby," the 2013 film based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel. Enjoy popcorn and refreshments.</p> <p>TIME CAPSULE CEREMONY NOVEMBER 20 3-4 P.M. SPENCER LIBRARY Celebratory transfer of 2024 time capsule to University Archives, offering future Jayhawks a glimpse into our lives, culture, and achievements 100 years from now.</p>

LIB.KU.EDU/WATSON100

- Identify a theme and let it inspire
- Celebrate a Season, not a single day
- Create events for everyone
- Build new traditions

The Events: Engaging our Communities



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Signature event: Rhapsody in Jayhawk Blue



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The Events: Engaging our Communities

Grand Finale: Time Capsule Development Ceremony



The Results: Realizing Unexpected Rewards



- Philanthropy
 - Donor engagement
 - One Day One KU
 - Launch KU campaign
 - Surprise gift
- Community Building

Q&A

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View more online...

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