Dearest Muse,
I do not invoke but address you,
For I wish to thank you for your watch
Over this humble (or not so) university library
Where thousands and I have spent hours in study.
Please accept this work.

O, I cry to passerby—have you seen her? Have you come inside? Have you
Paid a salute for a blessing on your work?
From the Muse of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library?
There she sits by the door to the quad, a study
In worn marble on a plain iron bench, she keeps watch
Over all those who enter her domain. (They smile. Do I amuse?)

She wears a watch
And goggles pushed up onto her hair—a practical Muse.
I imagine she has come fresh from diving, some study
Of fantastic ocean creatures or slow-towing plankton—the steady work
Of science, as it takes the world and me and you
Forward, sometimes through this library,
Students, teachers, passerby—there is so much to do in a good library.
Sometimes you can even get done your work.
More often you are caught in the endless flood of work, study,
Essay, friend, study, and the sun rises but not on D-level and you stare into dead
Space and muse.
That somewhere out there is the world (you’re had at it) and friends (who all got this
assignment done like competent people) and food (you don’t recall the taste of
strawberries nor the sound of water, the touch of grass...) and you, in the dark,
Useless, lost you—
Rest, Restore. A library has comfortable chairs and the Muse will keep watch.

There is more, too, perhaps more, in lighter study:
Humility in its prime: learning and laughing as they amuse
Themselves and each other at their work.
In a word, people watch!
Joining with near-stranger to work a project, emerging from the depths to unforeseen
companionship you
Will find no purer kinship than in a university library.

And what they build—oh, the works!
Endocrine Effects of Neural Synapse Protease in Averages in Dungeons & Dragons: A Study
Blueprint for a rocket, a solar shade, a perfect clockwork watch;
Essays and stories and poetry, the architecture itself for a whole new library—
For inspiration, above all, is the gift of a Muse.

Thank you.

—Jim O’Hearn