The Library of Congress video was fascinating in numerous ways; exploring the engineering and history behind the Incan suspension bridges was captivating. Within the first five minutes of the lecture beginning, the speaker put the true size of the Incan empire into perspective, stating that they rivaled the Ottoman Empire in expanse. In addition, after completing our reading I was taken away by the supposed efficiency and complexity of the message delivery system, and this video stated that the speed of the mail delivery system was not surpassed for centuries – until the 1800s, which is truly unbelievable.

When reading the title and abstract for the video, the term suspension bridge is used numerous times and never struck me as all that impressive. Watching the video put the true engineering marvel that the bridges were into perspective. I went in assuming a basic reinforced rope bridge and left seeing the true effort put into creating the bridge itself, the reinforced piers at each end, and in several cases tunnels being carved into the rock. It was also fascinating to learn that the Incan’s not only used the bridges for day to day navigation of the land, but they were also strategically placed and were used to secure their lands during times of conflict. When crossing the bridge, it can be burned or cut to keep back the opposing armies. In addition, due to the difference in bridge design from the Spaniards, the Incans were capable of spanning gaps that were wider than the Spanish were capable of at the time. The Romans and Spanish were used to compression bridges, which were flat, much heavier, and very secure. When the conquistadores would cross these, since they sagged from the vast expanse and seemingly inferior materials, they would often cross on their hands and knees out of fear, but to my surprise, the bridges could support their militaries, cannons, and horses. I was blown away by the strength that the woven grass had. The last piece I found fascinating was that the bridges often had keepers that would collect tolls and maintain the bridge every day. This is a very similar concept to what we have with turnpikes today and shows just how advanced their society was.