Eight individuals were selected as this year’s Sylvia Murphy Williams (SMW) Scholars. All are Illinois recipients of the American Library Association’s (ALA) Spectrum Scholarship. Established in 1997, the Spectrum Scholarship Program is ALA’s national diversity and recruitment effort designed to address the specific issue of under-representation of critically needed ethnic librarians within the profession while serving as a model for ways to bring attention to larger diversity issues in the future.

Thanks to a generous donation from Mary Jane Kepner and matching funds contributed by Ruth Faklis, Deanne Holshouser, Kip Kolkmeier, Kathleen Langston, and Debbie Smart, this year’s SMW scholars are receiving a stipend of $300, as well as complimentary registration for the 2014 Illinois Library Association conference. Contributions to the fund are welcome and can be made at www.ila.org/contribute or sent to: Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholarship Fund, Illinois Library Association, 33 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 401, Chicago, IL 60654.

Alonso Avila
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Undergraduate degree: Coe College, English Literature and Spanish, 2008
Current institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
I am pursuing a career in LIS because of my work as an educator in Chicago and Jordan. My interests also include the interrelationships among international hip-hop and academic librarianship, special collections, and archives.

Lucero Gonzalez
Hometown: Peotone, Illinois
Undergraduate degree: University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology, 2014
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Everyone calls me Lucy. I never saw myself as a traditional educator and throughout my undergrad I fell in love with doing research, which led me to pursue a career as an academic librarian so that I may help make an impact in the educational achievement of underrepresented students by increasing retention and graduation rates.

Bradley Jermaine Kuykendall
Hometown: Memphis, Tennessee
Undergraduate degree: Lincoln University, Business Administration, 2012
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
I’m involved in several student groups such as the ALA student chapter and Black Graduate Student Association of the University of Illinois. I am interested in the digital divide, corporate, and academic libraries.
Jhani Miller
Hometown: Park Forest, Illinois
Undergraduate degree: Governors State University, Interdisciplinary Studies, 2012
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Currently my focus is community informatics, but very recently I rediscovered my passion for oral history and storytelling. I’m a dancer. I’m a former Girl Scout. I’m an “orange personality.”

Jerrod D. Moore
Hometown: Panama City, Florida
Undergraduate degree: Lincoln University, Business Administration, 2013
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
I have always been interested in diversity from almost every perspective. These interests lead to an internal need for information, understanding, and insight; information that I love to share with friends and family. My love for sharing information has led me to pursuing a Masters of Library and Information Science; which ultimately will allow me to simply “connect people with information.”

Maria Lourdes R. San Ramon
Hometown: Zion, Illinois (originally from Manila, Philippines)
Undergraduate degree: Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila, Business Administration, 1986
Graduate School: Centro Escolar University, Manila, 1998
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
I’ve always wanted to go back to school for the MLIS, but with the economy I struggled for the chance. This scholarship opens the door for me to achieve this goal. It is my desire to strengthen my skills to best serve my present and future library users.

Alejandra Santana
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Undergraduate degree: University of Illinois at Chicago, Classical Civilization, 2013
Current Institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
I can’t wait to use my MLIS degree to help my Latino community, especially the young ones, as I have noticed the libraries I work in seriously lack bilingual assistance. I am currently setting up a display for the Belpre and Batchelder awards, which are not displayed as often as the Caldecott or Newbery, so Latino and international authors/illustrators can be celebrated too!

Jason Toms
Hometown: Aurora, Colorado
Undergraduate degree: George Washington University, American Studies, 2010
Graduate degree: University of Colorado Denver, Sociology, 2013
Current institution: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
As an African American I always reflect on the fact that books, literacy, and essential knowledge have historically been withheld from blacks as a condition of slavery, segregation, and inequality. I am empowered to pursue a career in academic librarianship because it will allow me to utilize my master’s degree in sociology. I want to be a mentor to young African Americans who may not have anyone who believes in them at school or home.