



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

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Press Release

The 2019 Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award is awarded to Dr. Nicole Cooke, Associate Professor and MS/LIS Program Director University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The award, presented by the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee, recognizes an individual or group for outstanding contributions in defending intellectual freedom or the advancement of these principles. The awards is sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Fund established in 2017 in honor of Robert P. Doyle.

Intellectual freedom can encompass many things, but it needs always to include an unswerving dedication to support, and in fact, progress the idea of freedom of speech (and by extension and particular regard to libraries, freedom to read) ensconced in the First Amendment. In receiving this award, Dr. Cooke is recognized as a librarian stridently dedicated to achieving this goal.

Dr. Nicole Cooke is exemplary when it comes to service to the profession, through ILA, and related organizations. She was this year's keynote speaker for the Illinois Youth Institute's Community Building Conference. By all accounts she is a positive force to be reckoned with when it comes to educating students, faculty, and library staff about issues in diversity, inclusion, equity, equality, and social justice in the library professions.

Two recent contributions Dr. Cooke has made to this ongoing effort include the creation of a new conference, held at Skokie Public Library, in March 2019 that addressed bullies and trolls in the library; she was cited and interviewed in two 2018 news articles (Library Journal and American Libraries) regarding librarian's right to free speech within social justice work. In addition to her keynote speaker status, the new conference added this year, and her regular teaching schedule, Dr. Cooke also makes time for

research, academic writing, and getting her works published. Such works include her 2018 book *Fake News and Alternative Facts: Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era*, and her 2016 textbook *Information Services to Diverse Populations*, based on her class of the same name.

In her classroom, Dr. Cooke fosters an open and respectful space where learners of all levels can speak their minds and also learn new media that will help them in the workforce. Specifically, in her class *Use and Users of Information “Information Behavior,”* the intersections of first amendment rights, fake news, and users’ information needs are explored and investigated. Dr. Cooke has been a positive influence on her students and empowered them to use their own first amendment rights.

The Intellectual Freedom Award will be presented at the Awards Luncheon to be held on Tuesday, October 22nd during the 2019 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Tinley Park.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release