



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Illinois Library Association

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Julie Milavec Selected as 2025 Illinois Library Association Librarian of the Year

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) proudly announces Julie Milavec, Director of the Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL), as the recipient of the Librarian of the Year award for 2025. This prestigious award celebrates Milavec's lifelong commitment to the profession, her many professional accomplishments, and her dedication to libraries and the communities they serve. This award is sponsored by Today's Business Solutions, Inc.

Julie Milavec, as both a daughter and a granddaughter of librarians, has been connected to libraries her entire life, including as a youth volunteer at the Joliet Public Library. She has worked as a librarian for over 30 years, 25 of those years spent in director roles, and worked at the Lemont Public Library District, Worth Public Library District, West Chicago Public Library District, and Plainfield Public Library District. She has served as the director of the Downers Grove Public Library since 2016.

At DGPL, Milavec's work has impacted the building, programs and services, and finances of the library. After the creation of a Capital Improvement Plan, she led the library through nearly 10 years of capital projects, including two partial renovations and a roof replacement, without having to take out bonds or make significant levy increases. She revitalized the Downers Grove

Public Library Foundation (DGPLF) which now consists of a board of 15 dedicated directors who run several fundraising events each year. DGPLF's events generate funds to support programming, collections, and artwork. Additionally, under Milavec's tenure, DGPL eliminated fines, established auto-renewals, created restricted-use cards for teens (without guardian approval) and unhoused patrons, and installed outside pickup lockers to improve access to the library and its resources.

Milavec is deeply committed to the belief that libraries are for everyone. Under her leadership, DGPL engaged in staff wide equity training, and created and implemented an Equity Strategic Plan. Through this plan DGPL examined policies and procedures for inequities which resulted in adjusted internal practices in hiring, programming, displays, and more. Additionally, DGPL has brought in exhibitions and programs showcasing perspectives and histories of marginalized communities including the *Legacy Wall* from the Legacy Project Chicago featuring LGBTQ history, the Human Library program, and the upcoming *Americans and the Holocaust* exhibit. To better serve its community and its unhoused patrons, DGPL partnered with Aurora University to bring social work interns to the library and has just hired the library's first professional full-time social worker. Finally, after the cancellation of a National Coming Out Day teen program of Drag Queen Bingo due to threats, Milavec emerged as a strong advocate for library values and the importance of LGBTQ+ materials and programming in libraries through her statements and professional presentations both locally and nationally.

In addition to her professional achievements, Milavec has spent a significant amount of time in her career volunteering and sharing her knowledge with the professional community. She has been an active member of ILA for over 30 years and has served on the ILA Finance Committee, the ILA Reporter Advisory Committee and is currently on the Directors University 2.0 Committee. She has previously held the positions of Director-at-Large and Treasurer on the ILA Executive Board. In addition to ILA, she has served on the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) Board, the System Wide Automatic Network (SWAN) Consortium Board, the PrairieCat Board, and the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee.

The Librarian of the Year Award celebrates individuals who exemplify outstanding leadership, innovation, and dedication to advancing library services. Julie Milavec's incredible achievements and lifelong commitment to the profession have strongly impacted DGPL and libraries across Illinois.

The Illinois Library Association Librarian of the Year Award will be presented at an awards ceremony during the 2025 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The conference will take place October 14-16, 2025, in Rosemont, Illinois.

For more information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

About the Illinois Library Association

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization that represents Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. Founded in 1896, it is the third-largest state library association and serves as a chapter within the American Library Association. ILA is comprised of 2,000 personal and more than 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries, as well as librarians, library staff, trustees, students, and library vendors.