



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Library Association

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**Braden Hajer Selected as 2025 Recipient of the Illinois Library Association
Robert R. McClarren Legislative Development Award**

The Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee is honored to present this year's Robert R. McClarren Legislative Development Award to Braden Hajer. The award is given to a worthy recipient from the Illinois library community—librarian, trustee, legislator, or library—who has contributed significantly to legislative development in the state of Illinois.

Braden Hajer was a student at Naperville Central High School in 2020 when he took a self-directed capstone course focused on misinformation. As he examined the rise of fake news on social media, Hajer became convinced that learning how to recognize and combat misinformation was not only a crucial skill for students to develop, but that it should be required in the high school curriculum.

Hajer researched and evaluated previously introduced and failed media literacy bills, sought the input of political experts, drafted language, and identified a sitting legislator to help refine and sponsor what became House Bill 234.

As the bill made its way through the legislative process, Hajer secured hundreds of witness slips and testified to Illinois House and Senate committees. The legislation ultimately passed through both the House and Senate and was signed into law in 2021, taking effect in the 2022-2023 school year. As his mother, Jen Hajer, recalls, “I think looking back, the most impressive thing was that he did this from his room in 2020. Calling and Zooming with legislators from his bedroom.”

Hajer may not have intended this legislation to be the testament to the value of school librarians that it is, but he is clearly a kindred spirit in librarians’ deep commitment to helping ensure an informed citizenry. The tenacity and patience he demonstrated in learning and successfully engaging in a process that is intimidating even to seasoned MLIS-holding professionals is admirable.

Hajer graduated from the University of Chicago in May 2025.

The Illinois Library Association Robert R. McClarren Legislative Development 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.

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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.