

# REPORTER

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

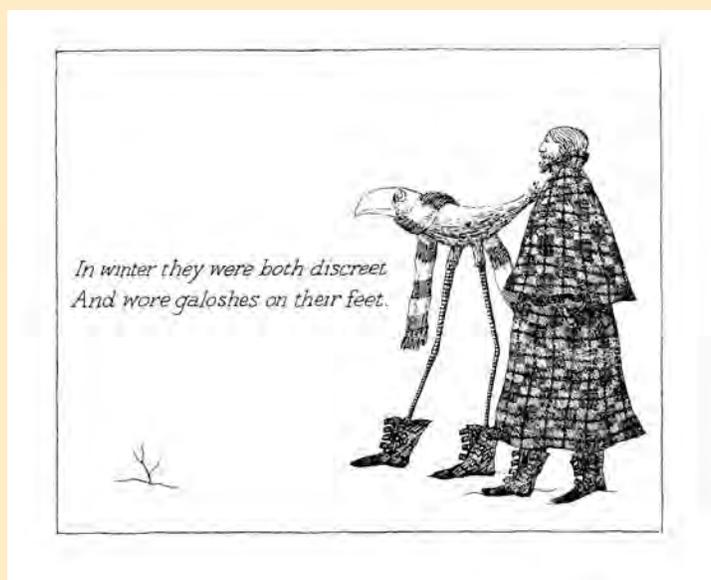
APRIL 2014

VOLUME XXXII ISSUE 2



# *The Illinois Library Association Reporter*

is a forum for those who are improving and reinventing Illinois libraries, with articles that seek to: explore new ideas and practices from all types of libraries and library systems; examine the challenges facing the profession; and inform the library community and its supporters with news and comment about important issues. The *ILA Reporter* is produced and circulated with the purpose of enhancing and supporting the value of libraries, which provide free and equal access to information. This access is essential for an open democratic society, an informed electorate, and the advancement of knowledge for all people.



## ON THE COVER

The cover illustration is from Edward Gorey's *The Osbick Bird*, one of the more than one hundred books created by this Chicago-born artist during his lifetime. Gorey's works are the subject of two fascinating exhibitions on display at the Loyola University Museum of Art through June 15. Dip into the article beginning on page 4 for a look at the exhibits in light of our recent polar winter. Related public programs in April and May include lectures on scary characters in children's literature, readings, and other tales of the dark side of Gorey's work, including Lincoln Park's only remaining grave, the Couch Mausoleum. For more information, visit [LUC.edu/luma](http://LUC.edu/luma).

The Illinois Library Association is the voice for Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. It provides leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services in Illinois and for the library community in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. It is the eighth oldest library association in the world and the third largest state association in the United States, with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. Its 3,200 members are primarily librarians and library staff, but also trustees, publishers, and other supporters.

The Illinois Library Association has four full-time staff members. It is governed by a sixteen-member executive board, made up of elected officers. The association employs the services of Kolkmeier Consulting for legislative advocacy. ILA is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization.

The *ILA Reporter* is published six times/year (Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct., Dec.) and is a benefit of ILA membership; the subscription rate for nonmembers is \$25. ISSN 0018-9979. Designed by Verso Design Corp., Joliet, Ill. Printed by Aspen Printing Services. Indexed by EBSCO in *Library & Information Science Source*. The *ILA Reporter* was first published in 1962.

See ILA calendar for submission deadlines for the *ILA Reporter*. Copy should be submitted by e-mail to [ila@ila.org](mailto:ila@ila.org). You are encouraged to include digital or film photos (black/white or color) and graphics (on disk or camera-ready) with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.

# CONTENTS



## FEATURES

- 4 **CELEBRATING FAMOUS AND SOON TO BE FAMOUS ILLINOIS AUTHORS**  
by Robert P. Doyle
- 8 **THE WRITER ON THE BRIDGE: CREATIVE WRITERS IN ILLINOIS LIBRARIES**  
by Diana Brawley Sussman
- 12 **REFERENCE RENOVATION**  
by Nancy Kim Phillips
- 16 **REFERENCE LANDSCAPE: PUBLIC AND ACADEMIC, LIVE AND VIRTUAL, NEW AND OLD**  
by M. Kathleen Kern
- 19 **NEW MEMBERS**

## OPINION & COMMENTARY

- 20 **MY TURN**  
by Joshua Farnum



Illinois Library Association

33 W. Grand Ave., Ste. 401 | Chicago, IL 60654-6799  
phone: 312-644-1896 | fax: 312-644-1899  
e-mail: [ila@ila.org](mailto:ila@ila.org) | [www.ila.org](http://www.ila.org)

## 2013/2014 EXECUTIVE BOARD

### PRESIDENT

Su Erickson, Robert Morris University

### VICE PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT-ELECT

Jeannie Dilger, La Grange Public Library

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Pamela Van Kirk

### TREASURER

Leora Siegel, Chicago Botanic Garden

### DIRECTORS

Keshia Garnett, Chicago Public Library  
Kate Hall, New Lenox Public Library District  
Jeanne Hamilton, Charleston Carnegie Public Library  
Rick McCarthy, Gail Borden Public Library District  
Scott E. Pointon, White Oak Library District  
Carol E. Reid, Heartland Community College Library  
Becky Robinson, Illinois School Library Media Association  
Amanda E. Standerfer, The Lumpkin Family Foundation  
Christina Stoll, Arlington Heights Memorial Library  
Ellen Sutton, College of DuPage Library  
Susan L. Westgate, Carol Stream Public Library

### ALA COUNCILOR

Denise Zielinski, Joliet Public Library

### EX OFFICIO

Anne B. Craig, Illinois State Library  
Robert P. Doyle, Illinois Library Association

### EDITOR

Robert P. Doyle

# Celebrating Famous and Soon to Be Famous Illinois Authors

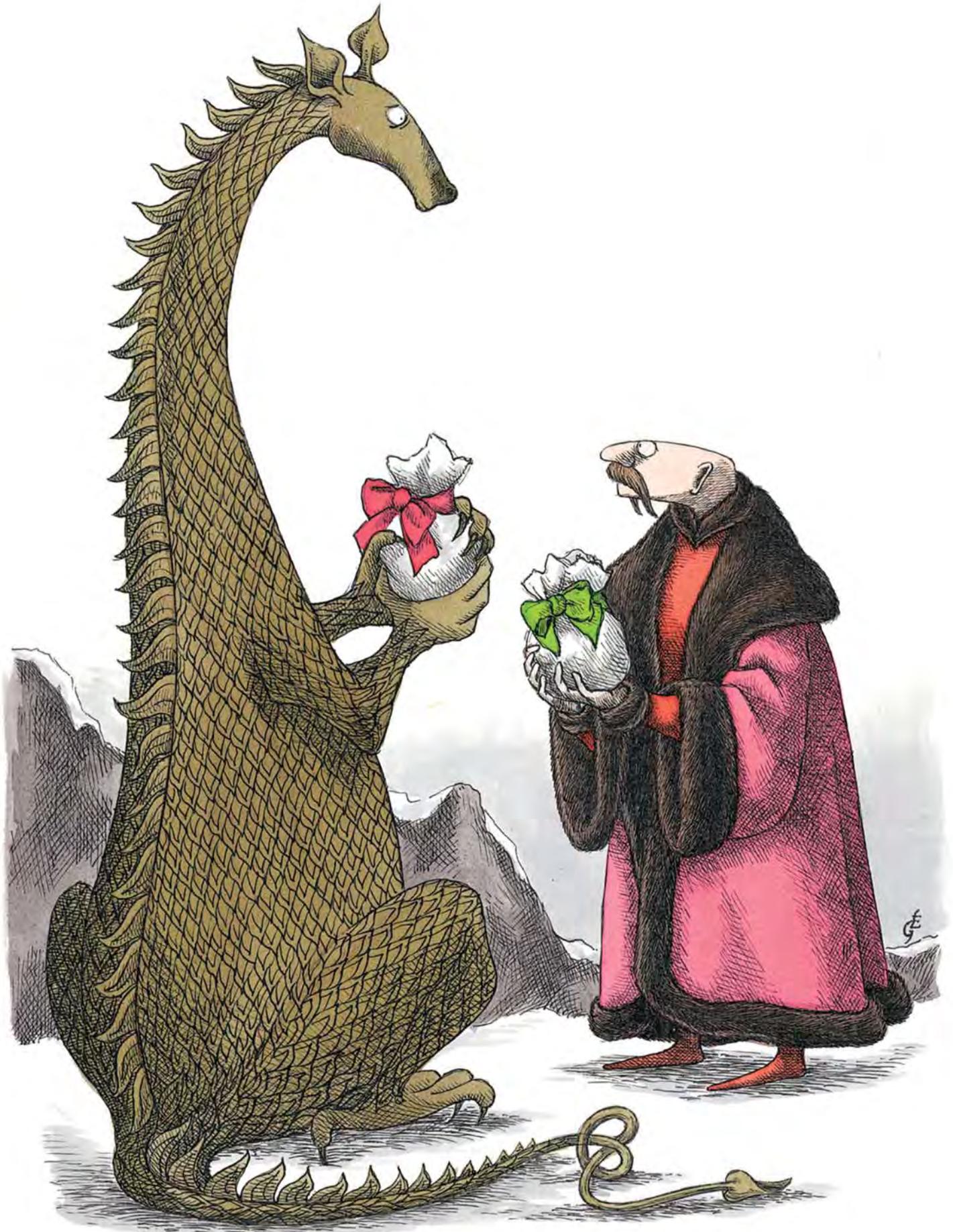
This winter has been a challenge—the snow, the cold, the tornados. The first day of March, six more inches of snow—yet another day to stay inside as the media reminds us that we live in “Chiberia.”

Instead, I head to the Loyola University Museum of Art for an exhibition celebrating a well-known Chicago illustrator and author. Think dark, foreboding, and lurking disasters—those seem to be the themes for the current exhibit celebrating the illustrations and stories of Edward Gorey (1925–2000). It is a perfect display of Victorian and Edwardian sophistication countered by images of the hilarious and the horrific, a delicate yet witty balance. The exhibit contains original pen-and-ink illustrations, unpublished drawings, illustrated envelopes, book-cover ideas, and theatrical costume designs. This exhibit with its impending doom themes and fantastic macabre humor seems most appropriate for this Chicago winter.

[continued on page 6]



*The Gashlycrumb Tinies, 1963*

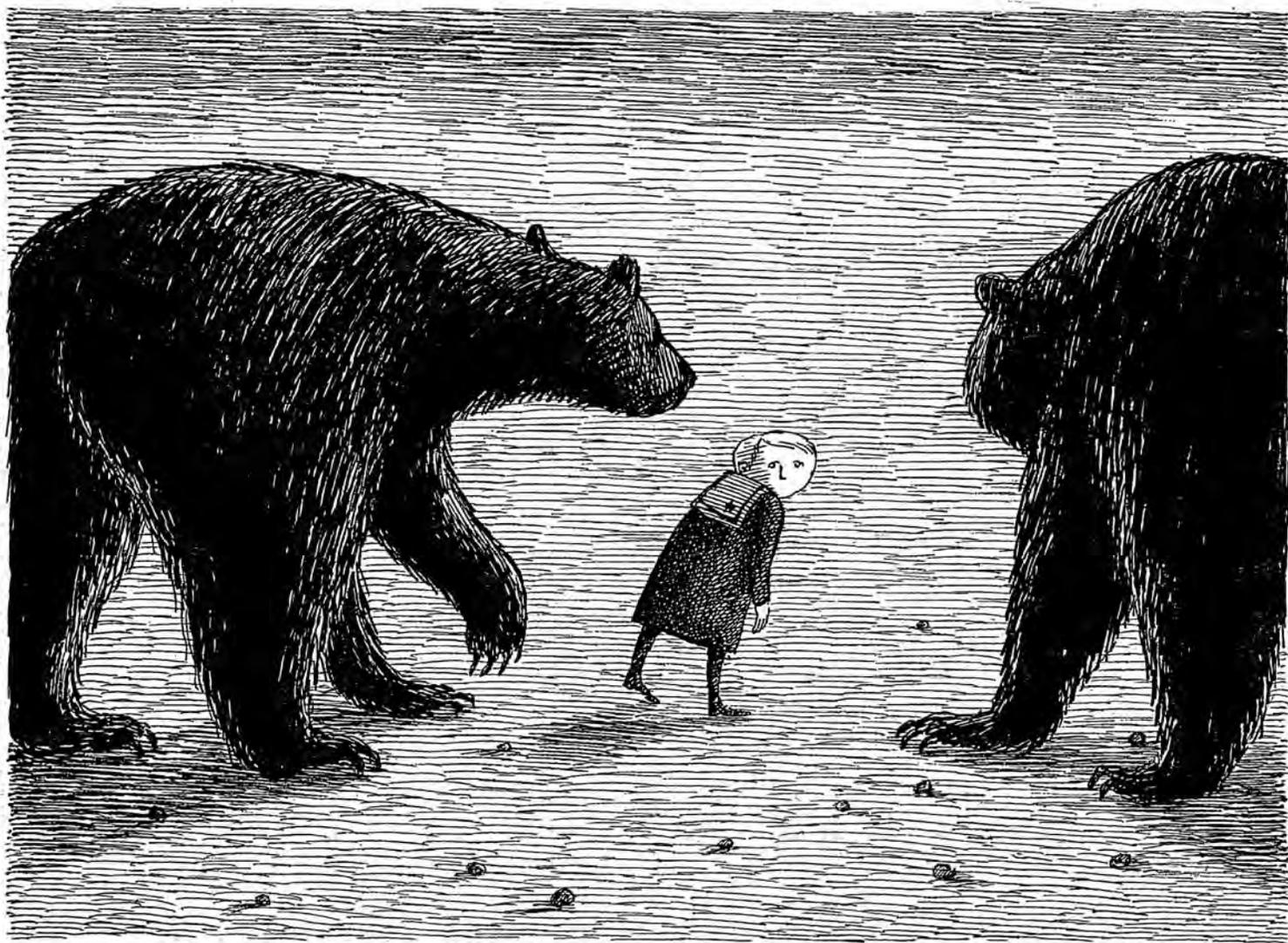


*Dragon and Man Exchange Gifts, circa 1950*

Gorey was born in Chicago to an artistic family: his father was a newsman and writer and his maternal grandmother, Helen St. John Garvey, was a greeting-card designer and illustrator. A child prodigy, who drew pictures at age two and taught himself to read by three, Gorey excelled at school, including Francis W. Parker School and the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1943 he left Chicago and spent two years in the Army before enrolling at Harvard University, graduating in 1950. A few years later, Gorey moved to New York City where he worked in the art department at Doubleday Publishing Company. In his spare time, Gorey worked on his own art and received a glowing review in *The New Yorker* by Edmund Wilson in 1959, which helped to launch his career. In 1962 he established The Fantod Press to publish his works. A prolific writer, he wrote over one hundred books from 1953 to 1999.

Throughout his life, Gorey avoided explaining his work and was often reluctant to disclose personal information. He is remembered by some as the tall, bearded man in the sneakers, fur coat, and long scarf who rarely missed a performance of the New York City Ballet. He is known by others for his distinctive greeting cards, T-shirts, calendars, posters, mugs, jewelry, and the like. He is probably known most widely for the art used for the opening credits of Boston Public Television's series *Mystery!*.

He is certainly known for his black-and-white images, as he explained: "I do work in color from time to time—water-colored drawings rather than watercolors; my seeming predilection for black and white is partially accountable to the fact that I knew from the beginning it was almost impossible to get my sort of book published in color on account of the expense, and eventually I ended up thinking in black and white."



B is for Basil assaulted by bears from *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*



*The Unstrung Harp; or, Mr. Earbras Writes a Novel*, 1963

When asked why violence and humor are frequent themes in his works, Gorey replied, “I write about reality.” Despite the dark themes, his works often appeal to children. He was frequently commissioned to create covers and interior illustrations for young people’s books. In typically small books, texts are kept to a minimum, and children are often the protagonists. In *The Gashlycrumb Tinies* (1963), an alphabet book that dispatches one tiny tot per letter, from “Amy, who fell down the stairs” to “Zillah, who drank too much gin,” readers are more engaged by the illustrations and rhymes than distressed by the sad fates: “M is Maud who was swept out to sea, N is for Neville who died of ennui.”

I walked out of the museum thinking the exhibit was fun and Gorey uniquely creative. As librarians, we collect, we share, we preserve, we celebrate the human story. In fact, Illinois libraries constantly celebrate authors and we are currently hoping to discover an unknown self-published author whose work will jump off the page for readers. The winner of *The Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author* project (soontobefamous.info) will be announced during National Library Week, April 13 to 19, 2014. And, if you are in Chicago, I think you might enjoy viewing the exhibit of an already famous Illinois author at the Loyola University Museum of Art (820 North Michigan Avenue), which runs until June 15, 2014. ■

---

The Loyola University Museum of Art, Chicago & the Loyola University Chicago Libraries present the comprehensive Edward Gorey exhibits. This is the first major exhibition of Gorey’s work in his hometown. Works are drawn from the collection of Thomas Michalak, a Loyola alumnus and recently retired Harvard University librarian, the Edward Gorey Charitable Trust, the Edward Gorey House, and other private collectors. Illustration(s) © The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust. All rights reserved.

## Public Programs Related to the Exhibitions

### From Grimm to Gorey: The Scary Character of Children’s Literature

Tuesday, April 1, 6:00 P.M.

Edwin Frank, editor of the *New York Review of Books Classics*, will look at children’s books as literature and in relation to other kinds of genre literature—such as crime, detective, and ghost stories; fantasy, romance; and science fiction. Admission is \$4 for the public and free for LUMA members and the Loyola community.

### A Fanciful High Tea

Friday, April 4, 3:00 P.M.

This afternoon tea will feature actors from the Dead Writers Theatre Collective who will present readings by Gorey that are darkly humorous—*The Gashlycrumb Tinies*; *The Epileptic Bicycle*; *The Disrespectful Summons*; *The Wuggly Ump*; *The Doubtful Guest*; *The Evil Garden*; and *The Salt Herring*. Admission is \$45 for the public and \$40 for LUMA members and the Loyola community.

### Third Annual Gregory and Rosalind Terry Lecture Ascending Peculiarity: Edward Gorey and His Sources (an exercise in presumption)

Wednesday, April 9, 7:00 P.M.

The Loyola University Chicago Libraries host Karen Wilkin, an expert on and friend of Edward Gorey. Wilkin will be joined by Michalak and Andreas Brown, who is credited with building Gorey’s career by promoting his work at Brown’s Gotham Book Mart. This event will take place at the Crown Center Auditorium on Loyola’s Lake Shore Campus, located at 1001–25 W. Loyola Avenue. Admission is free.

### Goreyesque: A Tribute to Edward Gorey in Words and Images

Tuesday, April 29, 6:00 P.M.

Contributors to *Goreyesque*, an online literary journal featuring work inspired by Gorey’s storytelling and visual aesthetic, will present an evening of readings. The journal includes fiction, essays, poetry, and artwork, and features, among others, darkly humorous short stories and poems in verse. The program is free with museum admission.

### The Hidden Truths of Lincoln Park

Saturday, May 10, 11:00 A.M.

To highlight the dark side of Gorey’s work, LUMA will host a tour featuring a talk on the cemetery that used to be in what is now Lincoln Park and its only remaining grave—the Couch Mausoleum. The talk will feature artist Pamela Bannos from Northwestern University. We will meet at 10:45 A.M. inside the Chicago History Museum at the North & Clark Café. The address is 1601 N. Clark Street. Admission for the public is \$8 with pre-payment only and \$5 for LUMA members and the Loyola community.

# The Writer on the Bridge: Current and Potential Services for Creative Writers in Illinois Libraries

“Eight-five percent of the human race wants to write a book.” Jamie LaRue cited this Pew Study statistic in his presentation, “What Does the Future Library Leader Look Like?” at ILEAD USA on October 23, 2013. As director of Douglas County Libraries in Colorado, he was in Colorado when he said this, while I watched on a screen in a darkened auditorium in Illinois. As a writer and secret member of the eighty-five percent, I felt utterly humbled by that statistic, but as a librarian I felt motivated to find out what libraries are doing to help me and my six billion compadres to achieve our shared goal.

In looking for answers, I found myself viewing yet another relatable onscreen moment. It was a tongue-in-cheek promotional video called *It's a Writingful Life: The Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project*. Librarian Veronda Pitchford plays a struggling novelist stuck in the writing process. She throws her incomplete novel off a bridge, conveying a common frustration for authors—a lack of meaningful and accessible resources for writers working on a book in a world where most writers' groups, classes and workshops are designed for critiquing shorter work.

Ironically, the Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project does not address that problem. They do, however, address a different problem: marketing a finished book in a world where more books are published than ever before. The project is coordinated by the Illinois Library Association and Reaching Across Illinois Library System with support from the American Library Association Digital Content Working Group, the Public Library Association, and the Illinois Heartland Library System. Illinois libraries have nominated 103 self-published novels by Illinois authors. One of those novels will be selected and announced during National Library Week, and that author will be made famous through this very effective network of libraries. For more information on the project, visit [soontobefamous.info/](http://soontobefamous.info/).

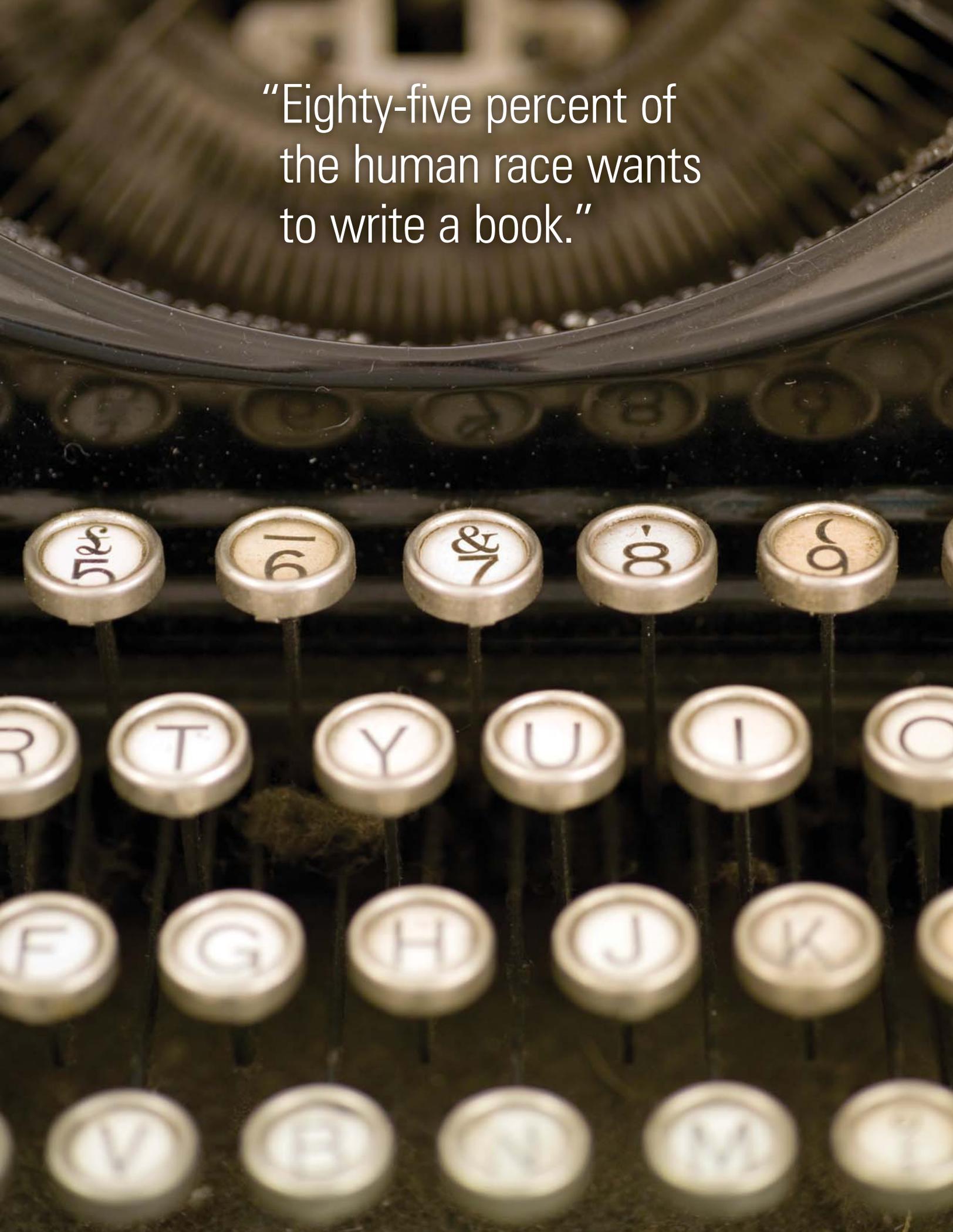
This project is very much a product of its time. About twenty years ago when I was working on a BA in Creative Writing self-publishing was discussed as a shameful career-ending option for writers who'd failed at the peer review process provided by the publishing industry. That elitism is rapidly fading. Today many writers seem disenchanted with the narrow market-driven chances offered by the mainstream publishing industry, so they are side-stepping that route, and peer review is being replaced by crowd sourcing.

LaRue offers evidence of this sea change, explaining that sixteen of the last one hundred *New York Times* best sellers, and 50 percent of the current bestselling e-books are self-published. The rationale, he explains, is that authors who publish with the “big five” publishers will keep 10 percent of their profit. The publisher keeps 90 percent, plus the copyright. Authors self-publishing on Amazon.com will keep 70 percent of profit, plus copyright. With Smashwords the author keeps 85 percent, plus copyright. Consequently, LaRue explains, we've progressed from 300,000 new titles per year to close to a million. The problem has switched from how to get published to how to get noticed, which presents libraries with an expanded role, not just in promoting books, but in, as LaRue says, “making an ally of the creator of content.”

[continued on page 10]



Students voting for their favorite haiku with Dr. Randy Brooks haiku instructor at the kukai-friendly haiku competition.



“Eighty-five percent of  
the human race wants  
to write a book.”



soon to  
be famous  
↑

# Illinois Author Project



Bradbury

Cisneros

[continued from page 8]

## WRITING BY THE NUMBERS

I polled Illinois libraries about their creative writing programs and interactive services for writers. Forty-eight public libraries, one school, and one academic library responded. Twenty-eight respondents support the publishing and promotional efforts of local authors through instructional programs or promotional opportunities such as book fairs and author talks. Skokie Public Library cited “The Ten Secrets to Getting Your Book Successfully Published” as one of their most successful programs for writers. Addison Public Library partners with area libraries on an annual series: “Inside Writing and Publishing,” wherein publishers, authors and other “insiders” offer informational sessions.

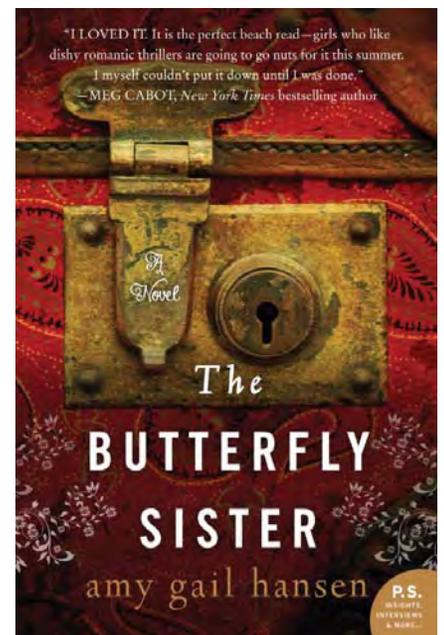
LaRue suggests publishing local authors’ e-books. No Illinois libraries reported publishing books by local authors in any format, although five respondents publish or partner in publishing a literary magazine, and Pembroke Public Library District is assisting its Anime club with publishing and marketing a book they’ve created, which includes local history and personal stories from patrons.

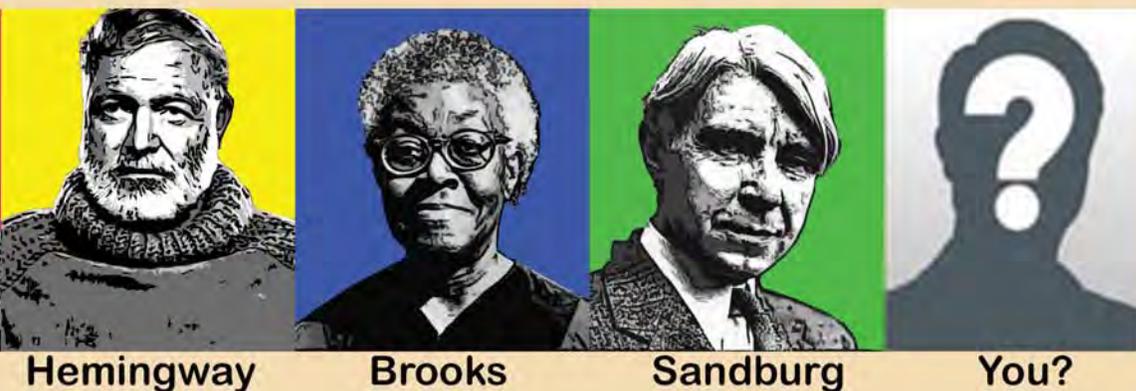
As for honing the craft, Illinois libraries support work in every genre for every age group. Novel writing is offered for adults at thirteen responding libraries, for teens at eleven, and for children at three. Graphic novels, creative nonfiction, short stories, poetry, drama or screenwriting, and mixed genre writing are all offered for every age group. The most common programs include sixteen poetry programs for teens, sixteen memoir or creative nonfiction programs for adults, and fifteen short story programs for adults. Poetry was the most offered genre for children, and the most common contest genre for every age group.

Some programs have a specific focus. For example, Champaign Centennial High School Library was featured in *VOYA Magazine* in 2008 for “Haiku Cut!: Reading and Writing Haiku Poetry Workshop” for high school creative writing and photography students. However, “writers’ groups” seem to be the most common

program, with writers meeting regularly to inspire and critique one another. This is what Carbondale Public Library offers to children writing poetry and adults writing short stories, with MFA students as volunteer leaders. Leaders at other libraries have various qualifications from MFA or BFA degrees to success as published authors. Leaders are a mix of library staff, paid instructors, volunteers, and group members.

Getting back to the problem of the would-be author throwing her unfinished novel over a bridge—eleven libraries indicated that they offer long term support for authors working on book length manuscripts. This support seems to be happening in writer’s groups. Algonquin Area Public Library District offers two participant-led monthly writers’ groups: Creativity Cafe offers writing prompts; their formal critique night offers feedback. Several participants are working on books, and author Amy Gail Hansen worked on her novel *The Butterfly Sister* in Algonquin’s writing groups. The critique group’s co-moderator Brad Mathis explains that writers sign up for a time slot, bring copies, then read their work aloud, followed by group feedback. Many of the longer works shared are parts of books or long manuscripts. I suspect that reading aloud, as opposed to reading the piece prior to class, reduces the time commitment members invest in one another, allowing more writers to be critiqued in a session. Often, the logistical problem with critiquing books in process is that each writer, in addition to writing her own book, must simultaneously read and edit multiple books being written by others in the writing group. Reading aloud changes that process.





Hemingway

Brooks

Sandburg

You?

## LESSONS FROM THE LOFT

Illinois libraries do a great deal to inspire, support, and teach writers, but writers working on a book still seem to be adapting a short format model to meet their long format needs. Literary centers offer some models that libraries might want to try. Only six libraries responded that they provide mentorship programs between established and emerging writers.

I first encountered mentorship programs at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. The Loft’s Program Manager, Vanessa Ramos, explained that mentorships differ from critique groups, or visiting authors answering writers’ questions. Mentorships entail both one-on-one and group sessions. She feels that it’s really about building a relationship between the established and emerging writers, and shaping the individual writer’s work. When recently asked for a list of local writers who had participated in The Loft’s mentorship programs and are now well known established writers, Ramos easily came up with at least fifteen names. Many say they could not have completed their first book without the mentorship. The Loft’s mentorship programs have people working across genres—a characteristic shared by successful long-standing writing groups at Eisenhower Public Library District, Oak Lawn Public Library and others. Ramos says this “pushes people out of their comfort zones in a way that feeds their own work and process.” For example, “Looking at poetry can add muscle and music to your prose.”

Ramos also talked about the incubator programs at Grub Street, a literary center in Massachusetts: Six writers are selected through an application process to work with two authors on finishing a manuscript and publication proposal over the course of a year. The mentoring authors and participants each read and critique the six books in progress. The cost is around \$7,000 per participant. The Loft also offers classes in structuring a manuscript, as well as matchmaking for manuscript consultation services wherein writers work with a consultant for a fee.

There are differences between libraries and literary centers, particularly the funding structure and scope of services. However, there are far more libraries than literary centers, which means that libraries have an excellent opportunity to serve local writers. Perhaps Illinois libraries could partner in sponsoring a local author or two to mentor a handful of authors working on a first book, as selected through a contest. Perhaps our book groups would have fun occasionally reading and discussing an unpublished draft from a local author in place of published book. They could hear about the writer’s process, offer feedback and one day receive credit in the author’s acknowledgements. Forest Park Public Library provided similar real-world feedback for students in Columbia College Chicago’s Fiction Writing program. The students met with teen writers at the library to swap feedback.

Libraries and literary centers provide exciting program models to assist our “creators of content.” By continuing and expanding services for writers, I believe Illinois libraries can reach out to more writers standing on bridges about to toss over unfinished books. I offer this challenge to myself as a librarian, and to you, my colleagues: Let’s find those writers. Let’s help them off the bridge.



“Today many writers seem disenchanted with the narrow, market-driven chances offered by the mainstream publishing industry, so they are side-stepping that route, and peer review is being replaced by crowd sourcing.”

# Reference Renovation

Mr. and Mrs. Hartrey have just entered the Arlington Heights Memorial Library (AHML) from the underground parking lot. Mr. Hartrey needs information about a Toyota Prius he'd like to purchase. Mrs. Hartrey is looking for the title of David Baldacci's latest book and wants to register for a computer class. A woman wearing a library badge greets them pleasantly. "Good morning, how can I assist you today?" She is standing near a large colorful tower with four gleaming countertops extending outward, each equipped with a computer. A sign at the top of the tower says "Info." The Hartreys have come to the right place.

Sam scans the shelves in the nonfiction area, looking for books to prepare for his GRE test. He hears someone ask, "Excuse me—are you finding everything you need?" and turns to see a staff person holding an iPad and wearing a headset. A few minutes later, Sam not only has several books to check out, but he has also learned how to access an online test preparation database, right there in the stacks.

At the last minute, Barbara's daughter needs books on Greek mythology for a homework assignment. Sighing, Barbara dials the library's main number and asks for Kids World. Instead of transferring her, the person on the other end of the line says, "I can help you with that," and promises to deliver the identified books to the library's drive-up window. Barbara begins to think that this might be easier than she anticipated.

Over the past year and in conjunction with a physical renovation of the library, AHML implemented a new model for information services. Its focus is connecting customers with the materials and information they want as easily as possible, in ways that will surprise and delight them. The model was particular to our library and our patrons, but draws on many of the trends and practices that all types of libraries, large and small, are developing.

## BREAKING DOWN DEPARTMENT WALLS

As a customer it is frustrating to bounce around from place to place to have your question(s) answered. Over thirty staff drawn from reception, advisory, reference, and magazine and newspaper areas joined to form Info Services. The goal of this blended group is to answer the vast majority of questions without referring customers to someone or someplace else. Staff offer customers the full range of library resources available on a given topic, whether books, magazines, databases, classes, or programs. Beyond Info Services, all library staff are encouraged to answer any question to the level of which they are capable, regardless of department or position.

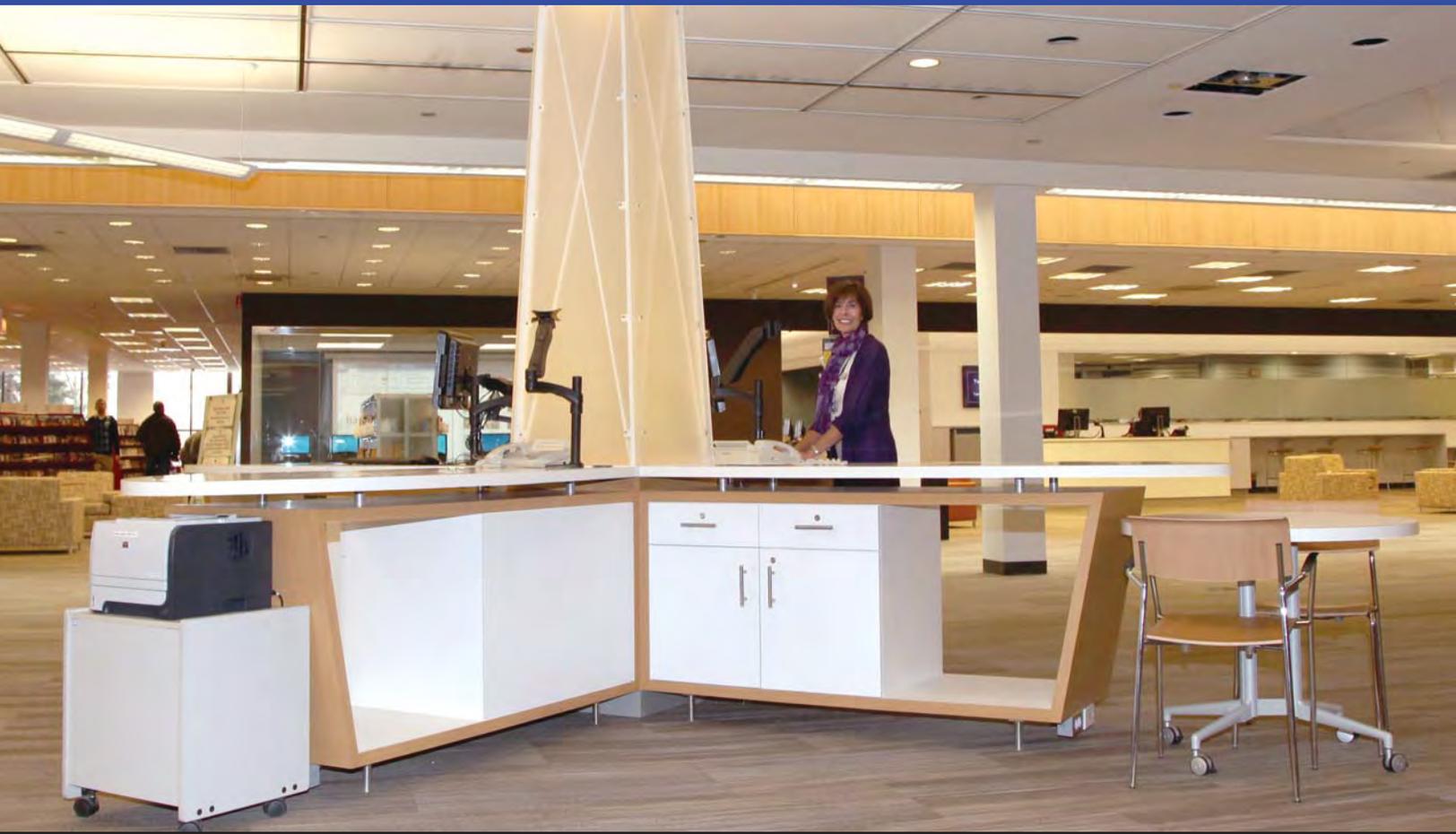
## SHORING UP THE ENTRYWAYS

In order to focus on each individual, however he or she comes in contact with the library, staff answer calls, online chats, and e-mails from a call center. This idea was first implemented on a small scale several years ago by diverting calls from the reference desk to a librarian in the back office. Once Info Services was formed, a pilot call center provided valuable insight for the final setup. Each month, staff answer an average 4,700 reference questions by telephone and 300 online chats, making AHML the most active Illinois public library in OCLC's QuestionPoint network.

"It's amazing what a difference it makes with no phones ringing in the public area. Staff at the Info Desk are available to assist people without interruption," observes Jeremy Andrykowski, senior manager of Customer Services at AHML. The four arms of the Info Desk are long enough to work side by side with customers, creating a collaborative learning environment.

[continued on page 14]





[continued from page 13]

## EXPANDING THE FRAME OF REFERENCE

Librarians know that some customers will leave empty-handed, rather than “bother” staff for help. Info Services staff step away from the desk, not only to accompany a customer to the stacks, but also to seek customers who look lost or uncertain and offer help on the spot. While roving with an iPad or Surface tablet, staff can confirm the availability of materials, place holds, and demonstrate how to use the catalog, databases, or e-materials. When asked if they need help, customers often answer with an appreciative, “Yes! I’m trying to find...”

One question may lead to others that would have never been raised if staff had not been proactive in the first place. Even when customers decline assistance, most are thankful and feel more comfortable approaching staff in the future. Learning from Gail Borden Public Library District’s use of mobile radios while roving, AHML staff use walkie-talkies connected to headsets to communicate with each other and shift fluidly between call center and the public service area, based on customer needs.

“When asked if they need help, customers often answer with an appreciative, Yes! I’m trying to find...”

## BUILDING UPON A STRONG FOUNDATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

AHML's organizational structure, physical layout, and technology tools all support an underlying philosophy of "customers first," which not only shapes the library's approach to information services but is also embedded in the institutional culture. Customers enjoy over-the-top efforts to track down information and materials and keep them coming back. Even the simplest requests garner appreciation and positive feedback, as long as service has been delivered in a friendly and prompt manner.

We are not the first library to blend services, create a call center, or rove. However, a new model of information services has emerged that is unique in its delivery, based on the library's size, physical layout, culture, and the community served. While changes in information services at AHML were integrated with a physical renovation, you can be the architect of your own reference renovation without construction.

- It can start with a different mindset, opening up expectations of who can answer what questions, combined with trust in staff and a commitment to training.
- Designate off-desk staff to answer phone calls to free up colleagues at the desk for in-house customers.
- Try standing in front of the reference desk and proactively approaching customers at common points of need, such as catalog stations.
- Experiment, tweak, and experiment again.

Whether you are inspired by another library's experience or your own best experiences as a customer outside the library world, consider concepts you might borrow, and don't wait for physical changes to "renovate" your library's reference model to serve customers in new and exciting ways. **ILA**

# Library Jobline of Illinois



<http://www.ila.org/jobline>

**Positions for Librarians and Support Staff**

All employer job openings are listed on the ILA Web site ([www.ila.org/jobline](http://www.ila.org/jobline)) for 30 days and the cost is \$100.



# The Reference Landscape: Public and Academic, Live and Virtual, New and Old

M. Kathleen Kern is president of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the American Library Association, and associate reference librarian University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As such, she has a unique perspective on the current climate in reference services, both from a major research university library and as president of RUSA. With both public and academic libraries reviewing and refining their reference functions, ILA asked Kern to comment on the broader landscape.

**Q: What's your view of how reference services have changed at the University of Illinois over the last decade or so?**

A: Like most libraries, we experienced a decline in the volume of requests, with the greatest decrease in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But you might be surprised to know that in each of the last two years we've seen a 7 percent annual increase, both by phone and in-person, with those requests at our main reference desk totaling about 15,000 last year. We started virtual reference thirteen years ago, and those requests have seen an average increase of 15 percent each year since we started. We passed 10,000 per year several years ago, and handled over 12,000 last year. Declining reference numbers do not alarm me. There's no reason to expect to go back to the levels of the 1990s, that's not the goal. The goal is to make information easy to find, without impediment. We do seem to have a higher percentage of difficult questions, people who have already looked and failed to find things on their own.

**Q: Tell me a little more about how your virtual reference is structured?**

A: We've used a variety of platforms since we started. Currently we use chat with instant messages coming in through the "Ask a Librarian" widget on our website. They're totally familiar with this type of service, whether from online shopping or services. They know there are two types of blank boxes on websites: one for chat, and one for search. We take in all kinds of questions—help conduct research, as well as answering basic questions on holdings, that sort of thing.

We have a number of libraries on campus, almost like a library with branches. But chat is a single service, staffed by a group of people from across the university libraries. If a question needs a subject specialist, we'll make a referral—sometimes we can find the specialist online, but if not, they respond to the patron by email, phone, or make an appointment. The chat system doesn't make the patron decide where to go to ask—again, the goal is to avoid creating any impediments.

Virtual responses do take longer than in person. We made some reductions in reference staffing hours about ten years ago, but levels have held steady over the last five years, maybe increased. The general reference services are now staffed by about sixty people across subject libraries, and we typically co-staff, both for in-person/phone services and have a dedicated desk for virtual services.

**Q: Drawing on your experience, can you share some tips that you think apply to all types of libraries in rethinking reference services?**

A: The most important thing is to watch your own patterns. Trends can be national, but they're also local. Stay aware of what other people are doing, but you need to do what works for your library. What's new to you, maybe be old news to someone else and vice versa. Smaller libraries have done a lot of things out of necessity that some larger ones are trying now, and they may or may not be the best course for them. For instance, our undergraduate library tried combining circulation with reference, but now they've switched to separate reference services at café tables with scheduled roving. As far as virtual reference, take a page from the online marketers—product placement is everything! Put it everywhere you can think of, and drive traffic to it.

**Q: In your role with RUSA, what do you see libraries looking for to help them find their way through this reference revolution?**

A: We're seeing increasing demand for training for frontline, non-MLS staff who are now working reference—more registrations, more requests. I personally see this as a good thing. We've got some very bright people working in our libraries and this is a way to keep them interested. RUSA still offers a four-week course on the reference interview, and we always fill the registration quota, so there's clearly still a need for traditional services. We compliment this with a series of webinars, both free and fee based, and they all tend to fill as well. [www.ala.org/rusa/development/onlinece](http://www.ala.org/rusa/development/onlinece)

**Q: Any last words?**

A: I worked in a corporate reference library before getting my MLS, and in fact, it was the reference experience that made me want to go to library school. That was the motivation. I think some of these new expanded models of reference services where MLS and non-MLS staff collaborate can draw new people into the profession. That may be a side benefit to providing the best services we can to our patrons and making the best use of our resources, but it's a great one. **IA**



# ILA CANDIDATES FOR 2014

The ILA Nominating Committee has announced the candidates for election in the spring of 2014.

For vice president/president-elect (three-year term beginning July 1, 2014 — June 30, 2017):

## **President-Elect candidates**

Betsy Adamowski, Wheaton Public Library  
Tina Hubert, Six Mile Regional Library District, Granite City

Board of Directors (three-year term beginning July 1, 2014 — June 30, 2017). A candidate from each pairing will be elected in accordance with the ILA bylaws as amended at the 1998 ILA Annual Conference; a total of four directors will be elected to serve three-year terms on the ILA Executive Board.

## **Director-at-Large:**

Rob Morrison, National Louis University, Wheeling  
Susan Prokopeak, Joliet Junior College

## **Director-at-Large:**

Beth Duttlinger, Lillie M. Evans Public Library District, Princeville  
Anne Hughes, Glen Carbon Centennial Library

## **Director-at-Large:**

Jeremy Dunn, Chicago Public Library  
Brock Peoples, Dunlap Public Library District

## **Director-at-Large:**

Roxane E. Bennett, Fox River Valley Public Library District, Dundee  
Veronica DeFazio, Plainfield Public Library District

Any ILA member wishing to be added to the ballot by petition may call the ILA office for information. Nominations by petition for an elective office shall be proposed in writing by at least one hundred (100) personal members of the association and delivered to the executive office by March 1, 2014. Candidates for director nominated by petition shall be added to the slate and placed in the paired candidate group that most clearly matches the affiliations of the petitioner as determined by the nominating committee. Petition candidates for vice president/president-elect will be added to the presidential slate as requested. The polls will open electronically April 1, 2014. In addition, paper ballots will be sent to persons requesting one. The return deadline is thirty (30) days after the ballot is postmarked. The electronic polls will close April 30.

Serving on the nominating committee are Gail Bush, Deanne Holshouser, Allen Lanham, Amanda McKay, Diane McNulty, Janice Sherman, and Pamela Van Kirk, chair.

**BTC**  
Building Technology Consultants, PC

Capital Review Plans  
Forensic Investigations  
Repair Design  
Historic Preservation  
Construction Oversight

Building Facades  
Parking Garages  
Structural Deficiencies  
Roofs  
Plaza Decks

Expert Evaluations | Innovative Solutions | Better Buildings

www.btcinc.com  
(817) 454-6900  
Edmi Hargrove, Principal  
Johnna L. Sumner, Principal

# ILA Welcomes New Members

We would love to welcome your friends and colleagues, too. By sponsoring a new member, you share the benefits of membership with others ... and help create a stronger and more effective voice to promote the highest quality library services for all people in Illinois.

## CO-MEMBERS

**Cathy Senior**, Charleston

## INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

**Doyle Public Library District**, Raymond

**Lacon Public Library**

**Midland CUSD #7**, Varna

**Wabash Valley College**, Mount Carmel

## PERSONAL MEMBERS

**Catherine Almendinger**, Downers Grove

**Todd Bruns**, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston

**Catherine E. Calvert**, Parlin-Ingersoll Public Library, Canton

**Erin Donlan**, Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin

**Juliette Douglass**, Six Mile Regional Library District,  
Granite City

**Kirstin Duffin**, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston

**Sally Gibson**, Illinois State University, Normal

**Lynn Hoffman**, Naperville Public Library

**Enviah M. Ingram**, Chicago State University

**Ann Kershner**, Palatine Public Library District

**Annabelle Mortensen**, Skokie

**Benjamin R. Smith**, Parlin-Ingersoll Public Library, Canton

**Gayle Strode Blodgett**, Spoon River Public Library District,  
Cuba

**Kelly Von Zee**, Addison Public Library, Darien

**Dawn Walden**, Woodridge Public Library, Plainfield

**Nikedra Webb**, Matteson Public Library

## STUDENT MEMBERS

**Mary Aylmer**, Decatur Public Library

**Scott Grotto**, Ella Johnson Memorial Public Library District,  
DeKalb

**Ashley M. Jacoby**, Bedford Public Library, Bloomington, IN

**Carol L. Warner**, Lake Geneva, WI

## SUPPORT STAFF MEMBERS

**Martha Cordeniz O'Hara**, Lake Bluff

**Jori Daniels**, ITT Technical Institute, Arlington Heights

**Debbie Evans**, Zion-Benton Public Library District

## TREUSTEE MEMBERS

**J. B. Carr**, Bellwood Public Library

**Wendy Driver**, Zion-Benton Public Library District

**Lydia M. Hodges**, Villa Park Public Library

**Cheryl Kennedy**, Mahomet Public Library District

**Mike McCain**, Fossil Ridge Public Library District, Braidwood

**James O'Hagan**, Rockford Public Library

**Denis O'Keefe**, Skokie Public Library

**Adriene Osborne Ives**, Golden Prairie Public Library District,  
Bloomington

**Dorothy Schardt**, Indian Prairie Public Library, Willowbrook

**Sharon Tharpe**, Bellwood Public Library



## ◀ MY TURN ▶

| Joshua Farnum, Chicago Public Library, Legler Branch |

# It's Not About the Rubber Chicken

When Joeshun picked up the rubber chicken, I pretty much figured the interview was a lost cause. We were still recording, but so far all I'd gotten was a bunch of one-word answers and a lot of bouncing. Joeshun is one sharp kid, but he wasn't really focused on what we were doing just then, the camera was making him nervous, and the rubber chicken was all he needed to get irretrievably distracted. But then his grandfather spoke up.

Through ILEAD USA, the Chicago Public Library had some devoted time and grant money to apply some twenty-first-century technology toward a community need. We were collecting videos of our community members, and calling it *City Stories/Chicago Voices*. The great part about doing this project in Chicago—and this wasn't even something I fully realized until we'd already been working on the project for some time—was that we could use the same tools throughout the city, and adapt them to meet a variety of needs. In one neighborhood, the project allowed us to preserve and organize existing local history resources; in another, it provided a connection with the homeless and the organizations working on their behalf. At Legler Branch in West Garfield Park, I realized, this project was a way to record a vital snapshot of community life.

I'd long been upset by the lack of visibility of the people in the neighborhood where I work. If you search for news articles on West Garfield Park, you get headlines like, "Man Shot and Killed." You get drugs and arrests, theft and murder. But what do I see every day? I see teens planting lettuce, families reading together and playing checkers, kids learning to write their own names—people living their lives. It's positive, it's personal, and it's human, and the library can be the place where some form of it gets preserved as a part of our city's culture.

Anyway, I don't know where Joeshun found the rubber chicken that day, but he was loving it, and was totally tuned out of the video interview. But then his grandfather, sitting to the side, spoke up. At first he just asked his grandson what he had there, and they talked back and forth about the chicken for a minute—but pretty soon they were chatting about the library, about computer games, and about what Joeshun wants to be when he grows up.

This, I thought as I recorded Joeshun and his grandpa talking, is the best interview I've gotten yet! The members of the community were there to provide their voices and their stories, and I was there to listen and preserve.

"The key thing is listening." This was Mario, another neighborhood regular at the library, whom I also interviewed for the project. I love that he used this phrasing exactly—"The key thing is listening,"—because it gives me this great mental image of opening doors.

Look at our shelves: the things we collect indicate what it is we value. When we collect stories like this, when the library listens to and honors the voices of the people who sustain our communities, we're able to show that we know these stories have value.

Please take a look at a short montage of the videos I collected at Legler: "City Stories / Chicago Voices - Legler," [youtu.be/R1hGNSLgno4](https://youtu.be/R1hGNSLgno4). It's a great peek at life in the community, and plus, that bit with the rubber chicken is pretty hilarious. ■

IN CONSTANT PRAYER

LITURGICAL YEA

IG

SACRED JOUR

KNIGHT



*Spotlight a  
Librarian  
Celebrity!*



**Shout out a nomination for an Illinois Library Association Award.  
Celebrate our Accomplishments.**

Nominating someone for an ILA Award has never been easier! Visit <http://www.ila.org/awards> to learn about all of the awards, then submit your nomination form and all supporting documentation via the ILA website. No service should go unrecognized, so toot your own horn or tell us who you think is the best! If you have any questions about the ILA Awards, please contact the ILA office at (312) 644-1896, or [ila.org/awards](http://ila.org/awards).



Illinois Library Association

**Nominations for all ILA Awards are due May 15, 2014.**

# Saunter while you study.



Niles Public Library  
Niles, IL

A great library has an extensive material collection, current technologies, and outstanding services. A library also needs beautiful and comfortable furnishings to bring it all together. LFI provides fantastic collections of study chairs and tables, lounge furniture, shelving and so much more.



[libraryfurnitureinternational.com](http://libraryfurnitureinternational.com) | 847 564 9497

Scan with  
mobile device  
to see slideshow!





Illinois Library Association

33 West Grand Avenue, Suite 401  
Chicago, IL 60654-6799

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #126  
Elgin, IL

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

# RE-PURPOSE

**space is premium.**

You're hearing it everywhere, you're hearing it often — our libraries are knowledge spaces, and accessing knowledge has changed.

Space can be made if you employ the right resources and solutions to optimize it. From high-density storage systems to modular casework and shelving systems, after over 40 years we can solve the design challenges you face, while also respecting the dignity of our library's historical and necessary role in public service.

Contact Dave Bradford - [dave@bradfordsystems.com](mailto:dave@bradfordsystems.com)  
or call 800-696-3453.



## Smart. Storage. Solutions.

**BRADFORD**  
SYSTEMS

Bradford Systems Corporation

[www.BRADFORDSYSTEMS.com](http://www.BRADFORDSYSTEMS.com)

800.696.3453