

# Illinois Libraries Today

LIBRARIES BUILD COMMUNITY

Illinois Library Association

# Libraries in Illinois

are cornerstones

of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas,

resources, and information in Illinois libraries is essential

for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage

of the past and the promise for the future. This brochure celebrates

Illinois libraries by presenting a narrative and statistical glimpse

at our achievements and concerns.

*Illinois Library Association*



“Money spent on libraries is money well spent. They are more than just places to shelve books. They are even more than just places to tap the Internet. They are essential to democracy. All that information is empowering. It helps citizens make informed decisions about their self-governance.”

*Chicago Sun-Times* editorial, December 24, 1997

Libraries are a billion dollar industry in Illinois. Governed by local boards of trustees, they provide open access to information and carry on a preeminent, national tradition of cooperation.

They also face many challenges. Illinois libraries are a testimony to citizen involvement, the consistent support of the Illinois Secretary of State, the Illinois General Assembly and locally elected officials, and the dedicated work of library employees and volunteers.

## How many libraries are there in Illinois?

Illinois has one of the most extensive systems of libraries—public, academic, school, and special—in the nation, coordinated in a single statewide library and information network called ILLINET (Illinois Library and Information Network).

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Public libraries<br><i>Total branches &amp; buildings: 799</i>  | <b>642</b>   |
| College and university libraries                                | <b>198</b>   |
| School library media centers                                    | <b>2,577</b> |
| Special libraries<br>(corporate, medical, law, religious, etc.) | <b>476</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>3,893</b> |

## Public libraries

Today, more than ever, Illinois libraries connect even the smallest communities with people, places, and ideas from around the world through books, magazines, videotapes—and increasingly, through computers and global networks of information.

### According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics:

- 66 percent of all households in the U.S. visited a public library in the last year. Among households with children under 18 years of age, 61 percent visited the library.

### According to the Illinois State Library:

- More than 61 million patron visits are made to Illinois public libraries annually.
- Illinoisans borrow more than 88.7 million items per year from their public libraries—books and magazines, but also compact discs, video and audio tapes, digital video discs, computer software, and more.
- Illinois reference librarians answer 16 million questions each year; 30 percent of the inquiries are from children.
- Residents in rural areas check out almost twice as many books per person as those living in urban areas.
- In 2002, per capita funding for Illinois public libraries was \$54.34. Local funding accounted for 85 percent of the total.

### A national poll conducted by KRC Research and Consulting in 2002 found:

- Most public library visitors (67 percent) borrow books; 47 percent use reference materials; 31 percent read newspapers or magazines; and 25 percent take out sound recordings, CDs and videotapes.
- More than half of library patrons use a computer to find information.
- Despite the increased availability of information via the Internet, 91 percent of respondents expect libraries to be needed in the future.

Public libraries are among the most efficient of tax supported services, serving more than half the adult population (66 percent) and spending less than 1 percent of tax dollars—federal, state, and local. Spending on collections and services totals over \$5.5 billion annually or about \$21.98 per person—less than the cost of one hardcover book.

Total property taxes collected for public libraries are less than 2.5 percent of total property taxes collected for all local government (FY96). The proportion of local tax dollars used for public libraries would be even less if all local tax revenues (e.g., sales, gas) supporting local government, excluding libraries, were included.

Citizens across the country showed their support in the voting booth by approving 79 percent of referenda for public library capital campaigns between 1987 and 1998.

**Across the state, a growing number of libraries offer public access to online information.**

**According to the Illinois State Library:**

- 98.7 percent of all public libraries offered direct public access to the Internet in 2003—up from 5 percent in 1993.
- 25 percent of all public libraries have their own Web sites.

Overall, only one in four of all U.S. households have Internet access. According to an MCI/LibraryLINK study, public libraries are now the most common alternative point of Internet access for those without computers at home, school, or work.

A 1996 Benton Foundation report found an overwhelming 85 percent of Americans think it is important or moderately important for libraries to provide computers and online services to children and adults who don't have their own computers.

## *Academic libraries*

Illinois college and university libraries offer combined holdings of more than 47 million volumes, or 16.5 percent of the total volumes in the nation's academic libraries. In a typical week, 180 academic libraries in Illinois serve more than 780,000 students, faculty, and others.

These collections range in size from a small college collection of less than 5,000 volumes to the libraries at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with collections totaling over 10,015,321 volumes. In liberal arts and community colleges, the focus may be on materials used in teaching and class assignments, while the libraries of large universities provide highly specialized materials required by scholars and researchers.

According to the Association of Research Libraries, two of the top U.S. libraries in terms of collection size are here in Illinois — University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is number three and the University of Chicago ranks twelfth.

Academic libraries are among the most active users of information technology.

- Nearly all Illinois academic libraries are connected to the Internet and offer a broad menu of electronic resources and services, both locally and to the nation's libraries.
- Electronic public catalogs are in most academic libraries and many now offer online access to the full text of journals.
- Text-based and multimedia CD-ROMs are available in almost all academic libraries.
- Technology for the disabled is available in many academic libraries.
- Many projects are underway to digitize local collections and make them available worldwide through the Internet.

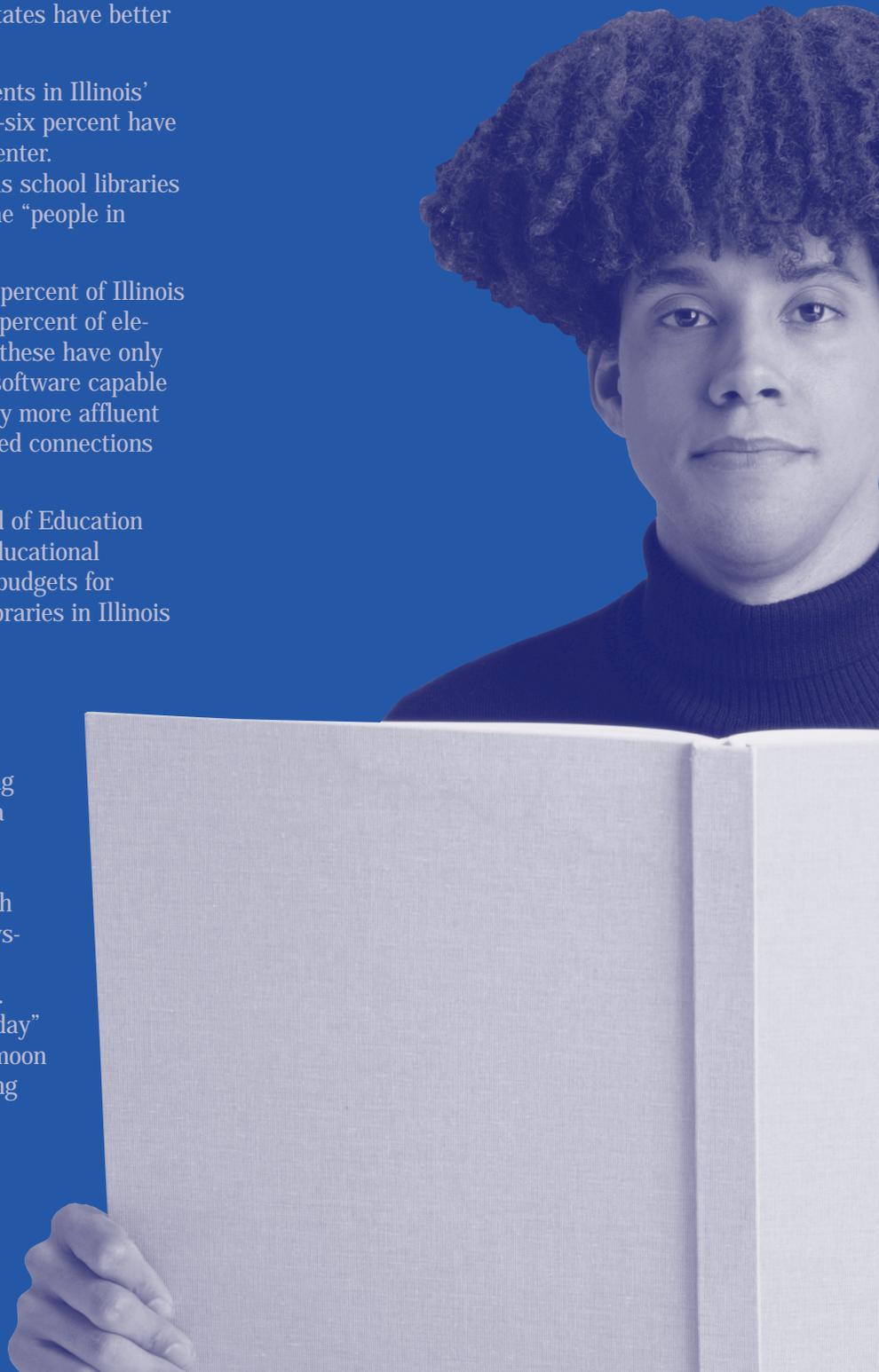
The infusion of technology and electronic resources has strained the fiscal capacity of academic libraries as they respond to this changing environment.

## *School library media centers*

The information explosion has changed the knowledge and skills required for productive living in the 21st century. To survive in the information age, students must become efficient and effective users of information. Working collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and parents, school library media specialists teach students the information skills they need to live and work in the next century.

- Statistics regarding Illinois school library staffing and collections put Illinois in the bottom 20 percent of the states — forty of the fifty states have better school libraries than we do!
- There are nearly two million students in Illinois' 908 public school districts. Ninety-six percent have access to a school library media center. Unfortunately, 16 percent of Illinois school libraries have no staff, and 35 percent of the "people in charge" have no library training.
- Computers and modems are in 80 percent of Illinois secondary school libraries and 50 percent of elementary school libraries. Many of these have only one computer with a modem and software capable of accessing the Internet, with only more affluent districts having multiple, high-speed connections available.
- A study by the Illinois State Board of Education and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory found that the annual budgets for almost 60 percent of the school libraries in Illinois did not exceed \$5,000 each. The average spent on school libraries was \$8,600.
- Materials in many school libraries are seriously out of date. According to an Illinois School Library Media Association survey, 40 percent of school libraries had more than 75 books on their shelves dealing with astronomy, space, and the solar system, but more than half of those books were published before 1970. Some even speculated that "someday" men and women will land on the moon and will work year-round in orbiting space stations.

- A Colorado study, "The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement," found that access to school library media programs and the amount of money spent on these programs are the best predictors of student achievement.
- Stephen D. Krashen's study, "The Power of Reading," concluded that voluntary reading (the best predictor of reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling ability, grammatical usage, and writing style) increased with access to larger school library collections and a school library media specialist.



## ***Special librarians***

Special librarians are information resource experts, dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goals of their organizations. They are employed most frequently by corporations, private businesses, government agencies, museums, colleges, hospitals, associations, and information management consulting firms.

Today's special librarians do far more than locate and collect data. Using the Internet and other current technology, they also evaluate, analyze, organize, package, and present information in a way that maximizes its usefulness.

## ***Illinois library systems***

In August 1965, the Illinois General Assembly established a system of libraries "to encourage the improvement of free public libraries and to encourage cooperation among all types of libraries promoting the sharing of library resources." Today, ten systems cover all of Illinois and have developed networks of resource sharing and mutual assistance. Locally elected boards representing the diversity of the libraries in each system govern and tailor programs to reflect local needs. Library systems help save taxpayers money and improve library service to the citizens of the state through numerous cooperative programs. In 2003, the Illinois library systems:

- operated shared computer catalogs for more than 1,200 libraries containing information on more than 43 million books, videos, compact discs, and other materials;
- traveled more than 2,000,000 miles to deliver materials to library users; and
- offered over 2,400 continuing education and training events to more than 27,000 participants.

## ***Illinois State Library***

Established in 1839, the Illinois State Library's twofold mission is to serve as the library for state government officials and employees and to coordinate library services throughout the state.

As the library for state government, the Illinois State Library maintains a collection of more than five million items, with strengths in the areas of government, public policy, transportation, education and other topics of interest to state government. The state library collection includes:

- an extensive maps collection, one of the largest in the country;
- Illinois State government publications. In its Illinois Documents Program, the library catalogs and retains three copies of every Illinois state government publication; one of these copies is archival, non-circulating. Additionally, the library distributes thirty+ copies to other Illinois depository libraries in the state and selected libraries beyond the state's boundaries;
- access to all federal documents, tangible and electronic, that are distributed by the U.S. Government Printing Office. The state library is one of fifty-three regional depository libraries in the country;
- information on patents and trademarks. The Illinois State Library is one of eighty-six Patent and Trademark libraries in the country; and
- works by Illinois authors.

State library staff members respond to all types of reference inquiries relating to activities of state government and provide research facilities for on-site use by state employees. All resources of the Illinois State Library are accessible to the citizens of Illinois either through their local library or by visiting the state library in Springfield. The state library participates in the ILLINET Online shared online catalog and OCLC to make its collection available in Illinois and beyond.

Through the Illinois State Library, the Secretary of State/State Librarian awards nearly \$60 million annually in grants to local and regional library institutions to enhance, improve, and supplement local initiatives. These programs include:

- formula-based grants to public (\$14.2 million) and school (\$1.4 million) libraries;
- competitive grant programs for local literacy projects (\$6.5 million);
- approximately \$2.7 million in annual funding for library technology initiatives and access to electronic information resources;
- \$6.7 million in grants of federal funds to local libraries under the Library Services and Technology Act; and
- \$18.3 million for the Illinois Library Systems.

Total state funding for libraries (\$59.7 million) is a fraction of one per cent of total state expenditures (\$68.3 billion in FY04). On a per capita basis (\$4.80/person), it is less than the cost of purchasing one paperback book for each resident of the state.

## *Resource sharing*

Since no library can afford all books and materials available, Illinois' statewide resource-sharing helps libraries use limited financial resources in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Users of even the smallest and most remote libraries have access to national information resources. Through interlibrary loans, school, public, and academic libraries are able to borrow materials from other libraries across the state or the nation.

More than 3.7 million interlibrary loan transactions (borrowing and lending) were completed by Illinois libraries in 1998. Illinois is first in the nation in the number of materials borrowed and loaned through academic libraries.

Through another program known as reciprocal borrowing, patrons of one library may borrow materials in person from another library. Nearly 5.5 million items were loaned in this manner.

## *Quotable Facts*

Federal spending on libraries totals only 54 cents per person — less than two postage stamps.

Americans spend more than three times on salty snacks as they do on public libraries.

There are more public libraries in the U.S. (a total of 16,220 including branches) than McDonald's restaurants.

Americans spend seven times as much money on home video games (\$7 billion) as they do on school library materials for their children (\$1 billion).

College libraries receive less than 3 cents of every dollar spent on higher education.



# Illinois Libraries Today

## *Principal concerns*

- Creating an informed electorate
- Ensuring equitable public access to information available through new technologies
- Supporting formal education curricula and encouraging lifelong learning and literacy
- Preserving the privacy of library users
- Promoting equitable copyright legislation to secure fair use of information in cyberspace
- Assuring citizens' First Amendment rights by providing materials presenting all points of view
- Addressing service needs of the 1 million Illinois citizens living in areas of the state without a tax-supported public library
- Securing the necessary funding for libraries of all types to fulfill their missions
- Protecting the public's right to an open information society



**“In an electronic era, libraries are not a part of the past; they are the key to our future.”**

—Kathleen M. Balcom, ILA Past President

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Robert P. Doyle  
Executive Director

Illinois Library Association  
33 West Grand Avenue, Suite 301  
Chicago, IL 60610-4306

phone: (312) 644-1896

fax: (312) 644-1899

e-mail: [ila@ila.org](mailto:ila@ila.org)

<http://www.ila.org>

August 2004

Illinois Library Association

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