

REPORTER

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**LEVEL UP
AT YOUR LIBRARY**



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

If you attended this year's American Library Association's Annual Conference in San Diego, CA, you may have seen Maisie Iven and Ruth Chan with their purple friend, Gordon, in the Exhibits Hall! Maisie Iven, Naperville Public Library, is the iREAD Committee chair for 2025: Level Up at Your Library while Ruth Chan is the illustrator for the Have You Seen Gordon? (Simon & Schuster, 2021) picture book series by Adam Jay Epstein. Gordon is the 2025 "spokes-character" for Level Up at Your Library. You'll find fabulous artwork from Chan, Oge Mora, Vanessa Brantley Newton, and Carey Pietsch in the 2025 iREAD Resource Guide later this fall!

Be sure to read Becca Boland's interview with Carey Pietsch, featured in this issue, where Pietsch discusses her process for creating an iREAD poster. If you'll be attending the ILA Annual Conference, remember to register for the Youth Services Forum Author Breakfast featuring Oge Mora! Lastly, don't forget to keep an eye on the iREAD website (www.iREADprogram.org) to stay updated on when the iREAD store opens later this fall. Don't forget! ILA Institutional Members receive a complimentary downloadable version of each year's Resource Guide upon request once it becomes available.

iREAD 2025: Level Up at Your Library: Play is one of the ways we learn to relate to others, to think in new ways, and to foster friendships, new and old. Level Up at Your Library is an all ages summer reading program based around puzzles and games. Whether you're playing with STEM concepts or gamifying your reading logs, learning to play chess or how to code video games, iREAD 2025: Level Up at Your Library reminds us that libraries are not just a space for knowledge, they are a space for fun!

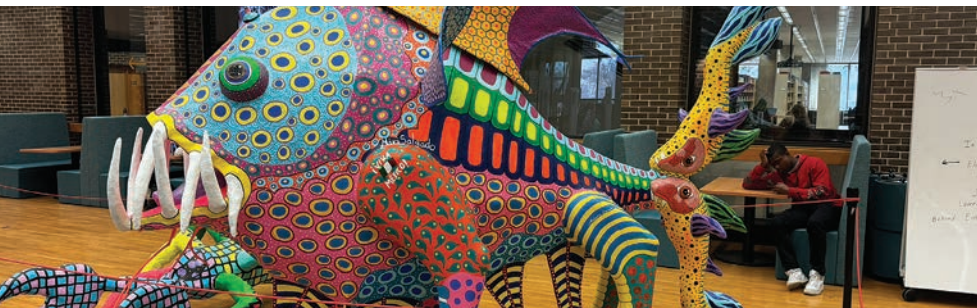
The Illinois Library Association is collaboratively shaping a strong future for libraries in Illinois, providing leadership, advocacy, partnership, and learning for the benefit of Illinois libraries. It is the eighth oldest library association in the world and the third largest state association in the United States, with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. Its 3,000 members are primarily librarians and library staff, but also trustees, publishers, and other supporters.

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

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See ILA website for submission deadlines for the *ILA Reporter*. Copy should be submitted by email to ila@ila.org. You are encouraged to include press-ready digital photos (300 p.p.i.) and graphics with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.

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Illinois Library Association

560 W. Washington Blvd., Ste. 330 | Chicago, IL 60661
phone: 312-644-1896 | fax: 312-644-1899
email: ila@ila.org | www.ila.org

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Creaciones del Sueño: Northern Illinois University Libraries Welcomes *Alebrijes* Exhibit

On January 29, 2024, Northern Illinois University (NIU) Libraries opened a new exhibit displaying large Mexican sculpture pieces known as *alebrijes*. The exhibit, which will remain open until November 8, presents a collection of 22 pieces created by 5 artists from Mexico City. The DuPage Mexican Cultural Center in West Chicago selected the pieces and provided them to the library. Many were earlier displayed at Cantigny Park in Wheaton and at the Gail Borden Public Library District in Elgin. Several of the pieces are huge, over twelve feet in height! Others are smaller, about the size of a library table. All are painted in a variety of bright colors and patterns. Most of the pieces on display can be found on the library's first floor, with single items on the lower level, second, and fourth floors.

Alebrijes are brightly colored folk depictions of magical beings. Many people believe *alebrijes* represent a long Mexican folk-art tradition, but in fact, they only began to appear in the 1940s. The well-known Mexican artist and *cartonero* — papier-mâché sculptor — Pedro Linares (1906-1992) invented the form and the name. He often told a story about how he came to create *alebrijes*. While in bed with a fever, Linares dreamed of incredible creatures combining the features of different animals. The creatures began chanting a single nonsense word: *alebrije... alebrije... alebrije!* This frightening scene awakened Linares and when his fever subsided, he began constructing what he had seen in his dream. He called these sculptures *alebrijes*.

Linares and his successors developed *alebrijes* in the wake of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Before the revolution, many Mexican artists identified with and tried to emulate European aesthetic ideals. With Mexican independence, artists, intellectuals, and politicians often sought to break away from these traditions and unify a population that had experienced a decade of civil war. Many turned to the tradition of Indigenous arts and crafts, and *alebrijes* emerged as a distinctively Mexican art form. Today, *alebrijes* created in many regions of Mexico are in both private and museum collections around the world. They have even entered mainstream culture with their appearance in the 2017 Disney film *Coco*.

To bring this collection to campus, NIU Libraries led a collaboration with the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, the Latino Resource Center, and the Division of Outreach Engagement and Regional Development, with the support of the Friends of the NIU Libraries. Drew VandeCreek, Director of Digital Scholarship and Special Projects at NIU Libraries, had seen the *alebrijes* when they were on display at Cantigny. He suggested to Library Dean Fred Barnhart that they would be a wonderful exhibit at the library. While there were logistical issues involved in moving the sculptures to the library, such as getting them into the building and rearranging current furniture to make room for them, these obstacles were quickly overcome. Campus partners were enthusiastic about this amazing exhibition.



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Institution. Moreover, academic libraries can sometimes be intimidating, and our hope for this, and similar exhibits, is to be a gateway to learning and knowledge for all curious minds, regardless of age or background.”

NIU Center for Latino and Latin American Studies Director, Dr. Christina Abreu, reported that her organization worked with the University Libraries to co-host the *alebrijes* exhibit. “These beautiful art pieces are a celebration of Latinx art and culture, and we’re honored to have these on display on campus for students, faculty, and community members to enjoy,” she remarked. “We’re also looking forward to developing some programming in the fall so that students can learn more about the history and significance of this art form.”

The sculptures were installed in February 2024, with a grand opening reception held on March 5. This event introduced the *alebrijes* to the university community, although word had already spread that they were on campus. The reception featured treats from a local Mexican restaurant as well as music by two student groups, Mariachi NIU and Banda NIU. The director of the Mexican Cultural Center DuPage, Fernando Ramirez, gave a brief introduction to the exhibit, and all were then invited to visit the sculptures around the library. Over one hundred people attended. After the reception, the Latino Resource Center led a Paint-Your-Own *Alebrije* event, handing out paint and small wooden forms to over 170 people who were inspired by the sculptures to make their own. The exhibition was also featured on an episode of the local attractions podcast *Under Rocks*, produced by Northern Public Radio. The library created its own digital exhibit, including 3D images and videos of interviews with the artists, at <https://digitalexhibits.lib.niu.edu/s/alebrijes/page/welcome>. In May 2024, two of the artists visited the library to make repairs on and repaint one of the sculptures. While visiting, they talked with several groups and displayed some of their other works.

Dean of NIU Libraries, Fred Barnhart, reflected on the library’s hopes for the exhibit: “Bringing the *alebrijes* exhibit to NIU is our way of celebrating and educating about the amazing contributions of the Latinx community. Our university has a large Latinx population, reflecting the region, and we want to provide the opportunity for everyone to enjoy this unique cultural tradition. The exhibit is especially timely because the university is on track to becoming a Hispanic Serving





Northern Illinois University President, Dr. Lisa Freeman, emphasized the *alebrijes*' significance for the university and the surrounding community: "I am delighted that the NIU Libraries has the opportunity to exhibit the *alebrijes* works. We are a campus community that deeply values the important role art has as a form of expression and the celebration of diversity. This exhibit brings to campus, and the DeKalb community, Mexican folk-art pieces that brilliantly capture the imagination. We are grateful for this opportunity to celebrate Mexican culture, and to educate and connect Huskies from diverse backgrounds." (*Huskies* refers to the NIU student body, professors, staff, and alumni as NIU's mascot is a huskie [spelling preferred by NIU].)

Putting together this exhibition was an excellent way for the library to link up with other campus groups. As a nascent Hispanic Serving Institution, we seek ways to serve our growing Latinx student population. This display of Mexican culture is one way to demonstrate that we value this cultural heritage, as well as providing our campus and community exposure to these magnificent items. Although the *alebrijes* will be with us until November 2024, we are already planning for a farewell party. This experience has also encouraged us to think about future exhibits or events we could undertake in collaboration with campus groups.

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How Illinois is Helping to Stop Book Banning, One State at a Time

The position of Illinois State Librarian and Secretary of State was held by Jesse White for twenty-four years. The election of Alexi Giannoulias in 2023 was a significant change to that status quo for the position of Illinois State Librarian. It has been said that this period of challenges to intellectual freedom is different from those in the past. Giannoulias represents new leadership in this new era of book bans.

PUBLIC ACT 103

Giannoulias wasted no time introducing House Bill 2789, which is currently known as Public Act 103. This is the famous law that “bans book bans” in the state of Illinois. But what does Public Act 103 actually do? Beginning in 2024, libraries “must adopt the American Library Association’s (ALA) Library Bill of Rights that indicates materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval or, in the alternative, develop a written statement declaring the inherent authority of the library or library system to provide an adequate collection of books and other materials sufficient in size and varied in kind and subject matter to satisfy the library needs of the people of this state.” It also prohibits the practice of banning specific books or resources.

This bill was signed by Governor Pritzker in Chicago at the Harold Washington Memorial Library on June 12, 2023 just before ALA’s Annual Conference came to town. Secretary of State Giannoulias was a keynote speaker at the Conference, gracing the very same stage as Judy Blume. He spoke to library

workers from around the whole country about his new law for the state of Illinois. During a time when other states are actively trying to criminalize our profession, he was a beacon of real hope for colleagues in more hostile states. Honestly, the moment was profound enough to bring tears to the corners of my eyes. Clearly, I was not alone in this feeling. After the conference, this idea spread across the nation.

LEGISLATION IN OTHER STATES

The news on this changes rapidly, since all of these pieces of legislation are in the bill phase, working themselves through the legislative process, at the time of writing. The wording differs slightly from state to state but they all include the same theme of supporting the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, which stems from Illinois Public Act 103.

California: Assembly Bill 1078
Kansas: Senate Bill 358
Maryland: House Bill 0785 & Senate Bill 0738
Massachusetts: House Bill 4229 & Senate Bill 2528
New Mexico: House Bill 123
Minnesota: House File 3782
New Jersey: Senate Bill 2421
New York: Assembly Bill A7843
Pennsylvania: Senate Bill 926 & House Bill 1506
Utah: House Bill 583
Vermont: Senate Bill 220

“So does banning book bans mean the fight is over?”



MILLBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT 24

So does banning book bans mean the fight is over? Unfortunately, no. In March 2024, Millburn K-8 School District 24's Board of Education voted to remove the Illinois Young Readers' Choice Awards. It was not an explicit book ban but the removal of three "Battle of the Books" type of book lists — Rebecca Caudill, Bluestem, and Monarch — that students across the state of Illinois vote for annually. After much discussion on the pros and cons of replacing the current opt-out system with an opt-in system, Board Member Skeppstrom put forth a motion to put things back to how they were on March 1, 2024 before all the drama began. Board President Lorentzen changed his original vote, which re-instated the Illinois Young Readers' Choice Awards and was met with thunderous applause from students, parents, teachers, and librarians.

This is a very brief summary of the events and if you would like to keep abreast of intellectual freedom happenings in your area, consider signing up for the Unite Against Book Bans Illinois Regional Response Team. Send a message to RRTeam@ila.org.

LIBRARIES AND THE ALA

Outside of Illinois, libraries in other states are facing pressure to remove titles from their collections and even withdraw their membership from ALA. The American Library Association, the oldest and largest library association in the world, is a nonprofit organization that furthers libraries and library education. In Georgia, several senate bills that concern library workers or library's relationships with ALA are being brought to discussion.

Here is a list of Senate Bills proposed in Georgia.

S.B. 390: A proposal to outlaw ALA, making it illegal for Georgia's public schools and libraries to accept ALA funding.

S.B. 365: A proposal to require schools to send an email whenever a child borrows school library material if a parent chooses.

S.B. 154: A proposal to allow school librarians to be criminally prosecuted for distributing materials deemed harmful to minors.

Senate Bill 390 (S.B. 390) has raised the biggest concern as MLIS, or Master's in Information and Library Science, programs and schools are accredited by the ALA. What will happen to MLIS programs or accreditation in Georgia? In addition to accreditation, ALA publishes the journals *American Libraries*, *Booklist*, and *Choice*. As a result of the ban, public libraries and schools may not be able to use these journals as resources.

In Louisiana, House Bill 777 (HB 777) was introduced by Representative Kellee Dickerson in March 2024. Instead of simply challenging libraries' relationships with ALA, this bill proposes criminalizing libraries and library workers that join ALA.

HB 777 reads:

- A. No public official or employee shall appropriate, allocate, reimburse, or otherwise or in any way expend public funds to or with the American Library Association or its successor.
- B. No public employee shall request or receive reimbursement or remuneration in any form for continuing education or for attending a conference if the continuing education or conference was sponsored or conducted, in whole or in part, by the American Library Association or its successor.
- C. Whoever violates this Section shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or be imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for not more than two years, or both.

"This is why it is important to show up to board meetings in your community and adjacent communities."

Again, this bill pressures public libraries and library staff to terminate ALA membership. Libraries would be prohibited from sending staff to any continuing education or conferences associated with ALA, the biggest nonprofit organization that promotes libraries and library education in the nation. The threat of a substantial fine or imprisonment faces those who dare violate this bill.

Although the future of these bills is yet to be determined at the time of this writing, their entrance into proposed state house and senate bills is noteworthy. Legislation, such as Giannoulis's HB 2789, is instrumental in building preventative laws that protect libraries, library workers, and library users.

FINAL REMARKS

The fact that ideas from ILA members, advocates, and our State Librarian are spreading is heartening news during harrowing times. We have had our share of issues here from Niles to Elmwood Park to Old Mill Creek, so I think it is important to take a moment to recognize the hard work done to achieve success stories.

The reality is that Illinois Public Act 103 was a reaction to extreme book ban news coming from states like Texas and Florida. While many states do have similar bills working through their state governments, it does not always end in victory. This is why it is important to show up to board meetings in your community and adjacent communities. The sheer number of people at Millburn Board meetings was a persuasive force on its own and their students have their summer reading program back, which speaks volumes to the power of good people.

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ILA



A Conversation with Carey Pietsch

Before you start reading, I need to confess. I am an exceptionally biased interviewer. Carey Pietsch was the first artist I recruited in my role as iREAD Content and Development Manager, and therefore will always hold a special place in my heart. I went into this discussion very excited to learn more about not only her creative process but also her as an artist and person.

You may already be familiar with Pietsch's work on The Adventure Zone graphic novel series but the opportunity to contribute to iREAD was more than just another project for her – it was a heartfelt connection to her youth and a testament to the power of libraries. She was an endlessly gracious and generous contributor and an absolute delight to work with.

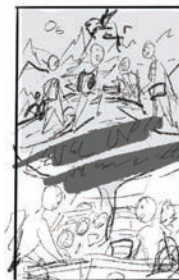
"This is my first time getting to work with a library, and I couldn't have asked for a better experience. Everyone I've had the chance to speak to or work with on the iREAD team has been SUCH a delight, and working with you has been honestly such a joy – this is my favorite of all the freelance jobs I've ever gotten to work on! It's set an incredibly high bar for all my future projects."

Pietsch's artistic process is a combination of both "traditional" and digital mediums, each step built on a foundation of storytelling and visual narrative. She goes between rough sketches and digital refinement. This blend of analog and digital allows Pietsch to maintain the spontaneity of her initial sketches while harnessing the precision of digital tools for final touches and adjustments – a process that ensures her artwork conveys her initial vision. She was generous enough to share insights into her process, both generally and specifically, for the art she created for iREAD. She discussed everything from the tools she used to her step-by-step process in creating the poster for Level Up at Your Library:



"Whatever I'm working on, I always start from the fastest, tiniest, loosest, messiest possible drawing.

"I think that was about an inch tall! Usually, nobody else gets to see these roughs; I spend a lot of time noodling in my sketchbook in pen and pencil to try to get ideas down before I can second-guess them. My comics all have starting points that look a lot like these too!



"I work in a mix of traditional and digital mediums, but after I draw a tiny rough on paper in my sketchbook, I generally take it to my iPad or computer to do a very slightly more legible pass.



"Then I did a slightly tighter rough pass with rough colors to pass along to the iREAD team for feedback and notes! I ended up changing the number of kids at the table, moving the text to the top of the poster, and shifting the overall composition a little bit to balance out that empty space. It's like a mini spot-the-differences game!



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"After that, I either ink it digitally or print it out and ink on paper with a variety of nib and brush pens. For iREAD, I knew I wanted to work digitally so any fixes/notes would be easier to manage. You can see that some of these inks ended up tweaked at the color pass, but mostly it's pretty set!

"After that, I got to color! I already had a rough color design from an earlier stage, but now it's time to take a neat pass at flat colors and add highlights and a little texture. I think I meant neatER pass, really – I have a super-rough color pass that was my very first color thumbnail thought, and the slightly cleaner version I handed in to the committee for review.

"But for a finished linework-heavy illustration, I then have to go through the process of actually coloring the lines I've ended up with, following the plan of that color rough, but more neatly. I love coloring! It's a treat for me in both comics and illustrations; making a solid color rough feels like solving a puzzle, and then final colors are a really fun execution of that plan.



"Choosing colors is a really fun challenge! I took several oil painting classes at Fleisher Community Art Center and Community College Philadelphia, and I honestly think those helped me with color, even digital color, more than anything else. Having to think about using a limited palette and mixing your own colors from a few tubes is a really good exercise!



"When I'm working on color, I always start with a very tiny thumbnail sketch. Here's an example of some I did for an earlier *The Adventure Zone* Graphic Novel.

"I'm thinking first of color as a way to establish mood or tone, and then to tell you a little bit about local color after that! Starting very small helps me keep the big mood of the piece in mind.

"For Level Up At Your Library, I wanted to have a clear distinction between the library and fantasy worlds, but also to establish a mood of fun adventure in both. In both halves of the poster, the main characters use a big, bright, varied palette, while the background is pushed back into the distance by using a more limited palette; in the fantasy world it skews blue and in the library more towards purple. I think that helps it feel like two distinct but connected worlds!"

It is probably no surprise that color plays a pivotal role in Pietsch's art. Whether it is Dungeons & Dragons-inspired illustrations for iREAD or delving into personal projects, it shapes both mood and atmosphere.

When asked about the mediums she prefers, Pietsch shared, "In terms of how I'm using traditional media – for short comics, sometimes I ink traditionally, then scan those inks into the computer for tweaks and tones. In those cases, I'll blow up my thumbnails really large on the computer, print them out, then put them over a lightbox with a sheet of nicer paper on top, and I'll pencil and ink onto that nicer paper using my rough thumbs as a guide."

I was surprised and delighted to hear about her process. I assumed that she would keep plugging away, like so many creative folks do, so I was thrilled to hear that she makes time to care for herself as well. "In terms of my art practice outside of specific projects: I do draw almost every day, but I also take time off for wrist health and mental health."

It is no surprise that Carey's creativity was the perfect match for this project. Pietsch's connection to libraries runs deep, rooted in childhood memories of exploration and discovery. "Libraries are really precious to me! Growing up, I was really lucky to have not only a strong local library (Ossining Public Library in Ossining, NY) but also parents who had the time and resources to take their kids to the library about once a week, which was a really special treat." These early experiences shaped Pietsch's artistic sensibilities, fostering a love for storytelling and visual expression that continues to define her work today. These experiences also continue to fuel her love for libraries because they were so pivotal to her childhood.

For Pietsch, art transcends mere illustration; it's a medium for exploration and empathy. And she finds that especially relevant in fantasy-based works. "I'm interested in using fantasy as a tool to explore interpersonal relationships in new settings. Using magic or fairy-tale rules to learn empathy and express vulnerability is a theme that comes up again and again when I'm writing."

These themes can be found throughout Pietsch's work. It allows her to infuse her work with depth and emotional resonance. "Across all settings, what really makes stories click for me is the relationships between characters, and whether those characters feel like true, full, fleshed-out people."

Pietsch's journey as an artist is intertwined with a community of fellow creators and collaborators. This collaborative spirit extends to her involvement with writing groups and book clubs, where she finds inspiration and camaraderie. "I started a local writing group several years ago! We're a bunch of mostly-local cartoonists, so everyone both writes and draws, which is really helpful when looking for feedback on graphic novel outlines and scripts specifically."

As Pietsch continues to expand her artistic horizons, she remains deeply engaged in projects that resonate with her creative vision and values. When asked, "What is your dream project?" Pietsch said, "Honestly, iREAD was really a dream project to me! It's been so cool to see the program work with more cartoonists over the past couple years, and I'd wondered about whether it might be something I could do someday."

As Carey Pietsch's artistic journey continues to unfold, one thing remains clear: her passion for storytelling and community shines through in every stroke of her pen and every pixel. From libraries to fantasy realms, her work resonates with readers, inviting them into worlds where creativity knows no bounds.

For those embarking on their own creative journeys, Pietsch offers sage advice: "Making time to play in your art practice is essential for health and career longevity. You have to be a person first and an artist second."

Carey Pietsch stands as a beacon of inspiration – a testament to the transformative power of storytelling, art, and the enduring magic of libraries. We are so lucky that she shared some of that inspiration with iREAD. **ILA**

What Does a Genealogy & Local History Librarian Do?

As a Genealogy and Local History Librarian at Wilmette Public Library (WPL), my daily routine is an interesting mix of genealogical and local historical inquiries alongside standard reference librarian duties, such as staffing the reference desk and managing a segment of the nonfiction collection. It's a specialized position that perfectly aligns with my interests, combining my passion for teaching, genealogy, and local history with my professional expertise as a librarian.

My journey into genealogy began at the age of ten, sparked by a curiosity about my own family's roots. During my college years, I enjoyed both researching and teaching and I worked on developing those skills. Initially, my career in libraries began in circulation at Wilmette Public Library, where I quickly transitioned to a full-time role as an interlibrary loan assistant. It was during this time that I decided to pursue a career as a librarian and subsequently obtained my Master of Science in Library and Information Science (MSLIS). During my studies, I realized the potential to merge my love for genealogy and local history research with my library degree, paving the way for my current role. Since September 2020, I've been serving in my current position as Genealogy and Local History Librarian at Wilmette Public Library.

In this specialized role, I am able to assist patrons with their specific research, and maintain our archival collections. One of the most fulfilling aspects of my job is conducting one-on-one consultations with patrons seeking guidance on their genealogical questions. Whether it's helping them navigate Ancestry.com or uncovering their ancestor's elusive immigration records, each appointment offers a new puzzle to solve. I particularly enjoy helping patrons get started in genealogy, such as one patron who brought in his giant family Bible. I showed him how to transfer that information onto a family tree and look for records online to verify its information. In our first preliminary search, we found his grandfather's birth record on Ancestry! I am able to help guide patrons through their family history journeys, relying on my genealogical research experience, knowledge of different kinds of records, and teaching skills.

Similarly, I enjoy assisting patrons in the Local History Room, where WPL's collection of resources is a window into our community's past. From Sanborn Fire Insurance atlases and photos to ownership indexes and old city directories, each item holds a small piece of our Wilmette history. One particularly memorable interaction was a visit from descendants of Archange Ouilmette, a Potawatomi woman after whom our village was named. I showed them biographical sketches written about their Native American ancestors, old documents, and maps that describe the area before the white settlers arrived, as well as suggested that they visit the site where their family's ancestral cabin once stood. It's moments like these that remind me of the importance of preserving and sharing our local heritage.



“One of the most fulfilling aspects of my job is conducting one-on-one consultations with patrons seeking guidance on their genealogical questions.”





Many visitors to the Local History Room are particularly interested in learning about the history of their house. I have developed a worksheet with a checklist to help patrons navigate all the resources at our library and beyond that could help them research their home. While our Local History collection isn't very big, there is always something that they can learn about their house at the library. Patrons can inspect the outline of their home in our Sanborn Fire Insurance atlas, trace the previous owners in our city directories and ownership indexes, and discover newspaper clippings or photos of their house in our House History binders. One patron even learned that her house was moved from another location in the village, and was originally built much earlier than she thought!

Ensuring the organization and accessibility of our Local History Room is a key part of my role. I make sure that materials in our Local History Room are carefully preserved and protected from damage, taking proactive measures to digitize or preserve fragile items. I work to preserve history from today, as well. I am always on the lookout for materials to add to our clippings files or library archive, and I evaluate potential donations to our Local History Collection. I occasionally collaborate with archivists from local museums to grow our collection or work on special projects. I rely on my understanding of archival best practices and organizational skills when managing our archival collections.

In addition to physical collections, I oversee our Digital Local History Collection, which offers digitized newspapers, photos, directories, oral histories, and more. Currently, I am leading a digitization project to digitize

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more of our newspapers to improve access to local news and obituaries. To ensure that these resources remain accessible to future generations, I regularly monitor our digital content and index non-digitized materials. I also enjoy curating digital exhibits that enhance the experience of our users and help them discover hidden treasures in our collections. Managing our Digital Local History Collection requires a slightly different set of skills, including digital preservation, indexing, understanding copyright, and basic HTML.

Library programming is another vital aspect of my job, allowing me to engage the community with genealogical and local history topics. From beginner topics to specialized research, I strive to offer something for everyone. Our annual House History workshop, in particular, has been a highlight, offering patrons a hands-on exploration of some of the resources in our Local History Room and fostering a deeper connection to our community's past. While I usually hire an outside speaker for these programs, I do occasionally present programs myself, leaning into my teaching and lecturing skills. I recently gave a presentation about incorporating family stories and recipes into a family cookbook! I often collaborate with others at the library to enhance programming series with a genealogical or local history offering. For example, during the library's Stories in Exile series last year, I coordinated a program about understanding migration patterns in Eastern Europe to trace

your Jewish ancestors. I also partner with a local genealogical society during several programs throughout the year. Offering a variety of programs is highly enjoyable because I always learn something from our knowledgeable speakers, and I have the opportunity to meet other genealogists in the community.

Lastly, continuing education plays a vital role in my work, as staying informed of current genealogical practices ensures that I can provide patrons with the most up-to-date assistance. Whether it's attending conferences, participating in webinars, or pursuing specialized training, there's always something I can learn in order to better serve our community.

Beyond these core duties, I handle other responsibilities as needed, from updating genealogy handouts and collaborating with the local historical museum, to writing blog posts and preparing a quarterly genealogy e-newsletter. Additionally, I am honored to serve the larger library and archive community as a member of the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board. No work day is identical to another, and I appreciate the variety of projects that I get to work on, as well as the genealogical mysteries that I get to help with! Each day brings new challenges and opportunities, deepening my appreciation for the stories that shape our community. Through all of these efforts, I strive to ensure that our collective and individual histories remain accessible and relevant for generations to come. **ILA**

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Public Libraries and “The Human Library®”

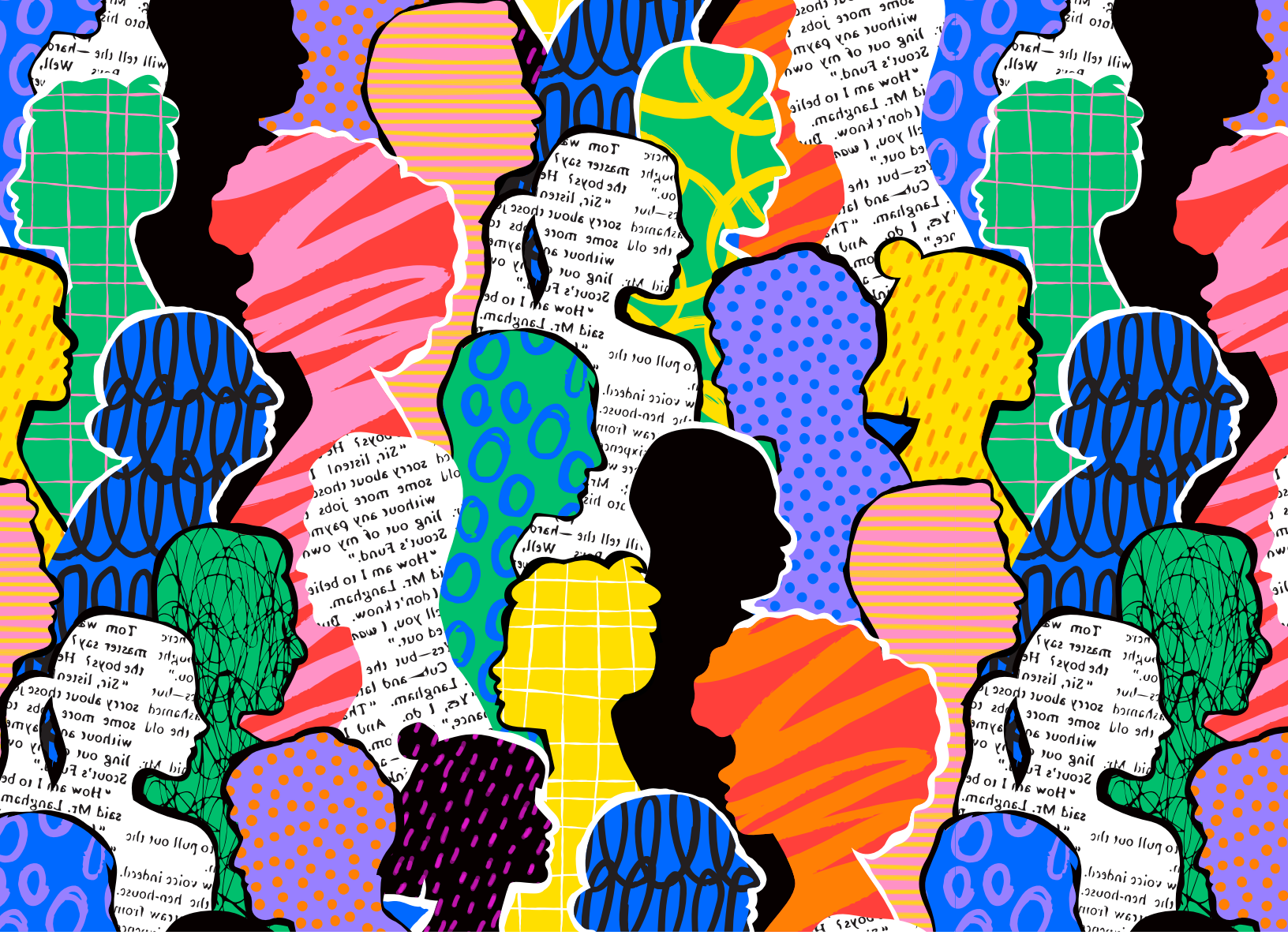
A noticeable trend has seen libraries branching out to provide access to “non-traditional” items and services. While often physical, this movement also includes providing opportunities for meaningful conversation. The Human Library is a platform for such interactions. The official website for The Human Library states: *The Human Library® is, in the true sense of the word, a library of people. We host events where readers can borrow human beings serving as open books and have conversations they would not normally have access to. Every human book from our bookshelf represents a group in our society that is often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status, ethnic origin, etc.* (The Human Library Organization, 2022a). Allowing conversations to grow organically between the human books and their readers is a way to grow understanding, respect, or in the organization’s words, an opportunity to “un-judge someone.”

The Human Library (*Menneskebiblioteket* in Danish) was originally developed in 2000 by a team of 4 creators for the Roskilde Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark; currently, the trademarked concept of “The Human Library Organization” exists in more than 85 countries (The Human Library Organization, 2022b). While their website mentions “libraries, schools, high schools, and festivals” as potential host sites, this article focuses on events held at public libraries in the state of Illinois. Three libraries who have hosted such events over the course of the past year include Glen Ellyn Public Library, Naperville Public Library, and Prospect Heights Public Library District. All three libraries mention patron and staff interest, including specific requests for such events, as the number one reason for choosing to host The Human Library at their locations.

Geneace Williams, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Manager for the City of Naperville, feels that partnering with Naperville Public Library (NPL) and the Naper Pride nonprofit organization to host an event supports the piece of the city’s mission that seeks to find opportunities for “creating

an inclusive community that values diversity.” As Williams states, “It gave human books an opportunity to share their stories and readers an opportunity to hear stories from persons with different life experiences.” Anjelica Rufus-Barnes, an Adult Services Reference Librarian at the Prospect Heights Public Library District (PHPLD), says, “For the third year of the DEI Committee, we wanted to focus on easing patrons to the concept of cultural humility.” Rufus-Barnes views hosting The Human Library as a way to allow patrons an opportunity to “look beyond prejudices and stereotypes.”

A key element for such an event is the careful selection of books. J9 Vaughn (spelling preference their own), Adult Programming Librarian at Glen Ellyn Public Library (GEPL), says of the selection process, “We contacted individuals and organizations we work with who are part of different marginalized groups. Then we sent out a call to the Glen Ellyn community through our social media and newsletter.” Karen Luster, Adult and Teen Services Supervisor at the Nichols location of NPL, also references the focus on marginalized groups; she states, “The organizers reviewed the Human Library’s *15 Pillars of Prejudice* and prioritized the topics we wanted to have at the event. We then invited friends and acquaintances to participate. I also reached out to the Glen Ellyn Public Library, who had hosted a Human Library event, and they sent event information to the books who participated in their event. We secured one book that way.” Prospect Heights Public Library District had an online application available on their organization’s website, which is how most of the books registered. Of the recruiting process, Rufus-Barnes says, “Our first book was a faculty member from Morton College, who J9 originally connected me with.” Their library also utilized many community groups and organizations; books were found through community flyers, requests through RAILS listservs, through a request from The Human Library Organization, and finally from a Connecting Our Community Networking Group meeting, at which Rufus-Barnes promoted the event.



To allow potential readers insight into the life experiences of a book, each book is asked to submit an original title and topic. At GEPL, the eight participating books wrote blurbs for themselves as well. Vaughn provided samples of these, such as for the human book self-titled *Living the Dream* (centered around the theme of Affordable Housing), whose blurb states: *I was never aware of how difficult it could be for people to find affordable housing. Two years ago, however, I found myself in quite the precarious situation. I was lucky to have been able to have Section 8 for a time, but very few landlords in Glen Ellyn were even aware of what the voucher was, or were not willing to find out about it, let alone accept it. The landlords who did accept it owned properties [that] left a lot to be desired. When I got a promotion at work, I made too much money. Some people were not too fond of affordable housing in the area.*

Topics such as home insecurity are potentially sensitive for books and readers alike, and for this reason, organizers of these events are required to undergo training. Of the extensive information and

training provided by The Human Library, NPL's Luster says, "Once approved [as an event host], organizers and books must attend their own unique training sessions. These trainings explain the methodology, prepare books/librarians for possible hiccups, and offer opportunities to do practice readings with other books." Rufus-Barnes also appreciated the extensive training offered by The Human Library Organization. Books were required to complete a virtual training administered by The Human Library, which was a two-hour, self-paced, virtual training. Staff members who were volunteering at the event also attended training sessions; at PHPLD, this included members of the library's DEI Training, Assessment, and Programming (TAP) Subcommittee. Rufus-Barnes says, "[Members] of the TAP Subcommittee attended an orientation for publishing partners and did a short, self-paced training module from the Human Library Organization. The Organization also provided opportunities for us to participate as readers during their monthly virtual Human Library events. I went to 3 of them, and they were awesome!"

After so much preparation and training, advertising these events to community members is essential. GEPL advertised in the following print and virtual promotional pieces: social media, a weekly newsletter email, the library's circular online and in print, and on their website. In addition to this, librarians engaged in verbal promotion as well by highlighting the event at related library programs. Of PHPLD's multi-month publicity plan, Rufus-Barnes says, "I spent a great deal of March and April [for the May event] submitting requests to the PHPLD Communications department about flyers, banners, social media posts, and newsletter blurbs. They worked diligently and did an excellent job. After receiving the survey results from the books, I contacted our summer reading t-shirt vendor to make *Human Librarian* and *Human Book* shirts for the event. TAP Subcommittee members also worked on swag bags for the books and planned the books' dinner." Naperville's Geneace Williams says, "The event was advertised through a press release, the city website, the library website, social media posts, flyers, and word of mouth." In addition, the city of Naperville did a follow-up promotional piece through the local television station NCTV-17 to explain the event, and resulting feedback, to the larger community.

Feedback from community members for all three library events has been overwhelmingly positive. Vaughn feels feedback from patrons who attended the GELP's event was very positive. They say, "The patrons who did show up found it to be very powerful and they each said they learned something." Williams said of the city of Naperville, Naper Pride, and NPL's joint venture, "The community response to the event was excellent, especially since this was the first time the Human Library was conducted as a community-wide event in Naperville. We had over 50 attendees and 115 reads." Such numbers indicate that multiple readers chose to read more than one book, which was an outcome seen at PHPLD as well. Rufus-Barnes says, "Several of the attendees read other books for a total of 38 readings. They appreciated the books' openness to tell their stories and enjoyed learning about people that they may not normally be in contact with." All three locations have since received multiple requests from their patron base to hold future events.

All three libraries are planning to host an event again in the future, and have learned key take-aways which will help in future planning. Vaughn mentions, "There were so many facets to the planning. The time I anticipated was tripled. The biggest thing to keep in mind is that the Human Library has many requirements on how things are run and marketed." In the future, Vaughn would like to collaborate with a high school or college group; they say, "[These events have] such a clear educational side to it, I wish we had tapped into that." Rufus-Barnes says, "We plan to have another Human Library Spring 2025. Planning is a lot of work but it's worth it to see members of the community learn from each other's differences."

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Read, Renew, Repeat in 2024: iREAD® Roundup

More than 1,300 libraries in 41 states, plus all Department of Defense base libraries worldwide, and libraries in Australia and New Zealand (it's not even summer there!) participated in iREAD® in 2024, themed "Read, Renew, Repeat." Conservation as a movement focuses on protecting species from extinction, maintaining and restoring habitats, enhancing ecosystem services, and protecting biological diversity. iREAD 2024: Read, Renew, Repeat made for a wonderfully diversified summer reading program that encouraged reading as a restorative method of self-improvement and self-preservation.

Begun in 1981 as an Illinois-only partnership among youth services librarians in the state, iREAD has grown to include formal or partial statewide adoptions well beyond our borders, including Alaska, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington. This year we also welcomed a consortium from Alberta, Canada to our partnership family.

In 2024, libraries decorated their spaces including creating murals, bulletin boards, full forests complete with wildlife, and displays; had innovative programs like tours of wind farms, recycled paper making, a lot of community planting and gardening activities, and so much more. Some libraries incorporated Smokey the Bear's 80th birthday while others worked with local nature and wildlife organizations. The most magical part of the program is seeing all of the ways that libraries interpret the theme and implement the program in a way that is a reflection of their community.

We thank Gretchen Schulz of the Aurora Public Library District, 2024 iREAD chair, and her committee for their hard work to develop and implement this year's theme.



Alpha Park Public Library, Illinois



Cedarburg Public Library, Wisconsin



Fossil Ridge Public Library, Illinois

O'Fallon Public Library, Illinois





Chatham Area Public Library District, Illinois



Newton Free Library, Massachusetts



West Point Public Library, Iowa



Watseska Public Library, Illinois



Rehoboth Blanding Library, Massachusetts



Petersburg Public Library, Alaska



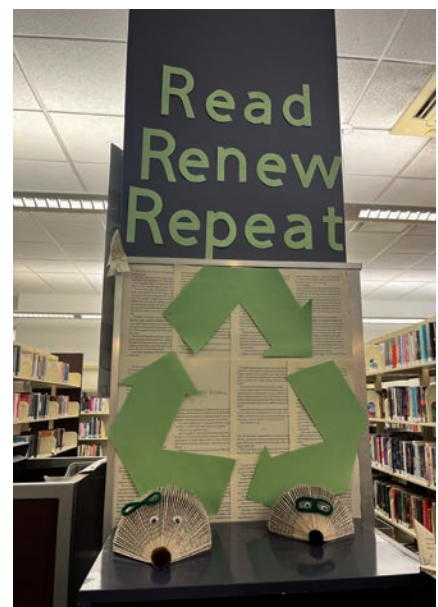
Plainfield Area Public Library, Illinois



Salem Free Public Library, Connecticut



Shawneetown Public Library, Illinois



The Hayner Public Library District, Illinois



Valdez Consortium Library, Alaska

ILA Welcomes New Members

On behalf of the ILA community, Executive Board, and staff we would like to welcome our recent new members. We hope as a member of ILA you contribute, grow, and thrive within the library profession and the ILA community; and support ILA's continuing efforts to create and promote the highest quality library services for all people in Illinois.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

MEternally, LLC, Houston, MN
Millonex LLC, West Chicago

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

North Pike Library District, Griggsville
University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein

TRUSTEE MEMBERS

Katherine Arnold, Warren-Newport Public Library District
Richard Coldiron, Maryville Community Library District
Timothy Krumm, Maryville Community Library District
Michael Murphy, Maryville Community Library District
Jacob Roberts, Peoria Public Library
Jeff Rowitz, Glenview Public Library
Deborah Silver, Lincolnwood Public Library District
Samia Wahab, Indian Prairie Public Library District
Rodd Whelpley, Chatham Area Public Library District

STUDENT MEMBERS

Stacy Burgoon, Naperville
Camryn Burkins, Urbana
David Buzard, Highland Park
Karina Camarillo, Aurora
Rose Cayer, Naperville
Garifalia Durkin, Wheeling
Tracy Evans, Sycamore
Anna Fifhause, Lake Bluff
Rowan Fluet, Chicago
Jennifer Fredrick, Bolingbrook
Matthew Frick, Homewood
Tori Golden, Chicago
Megan Hoppe, Chicago
Claire Hublle, Forest Park
Allison Isztok, Naperville

Paridhi Joshi, Warrenville
John Kirchner, Alton
Grace Krause, Homewood
Jason Peters, Palos Heights
Danny Rivera, Chicago
Morgan Rondinelli, Bloomington
Colleen Schneider Cameron, Woodstock
Jasmine Schreiber, Chicago
Haley Shepherd, Urbana
Kristen Sienkiewicz, Rolling Meadows
Alexa Urquhart, Urbana
Annika Wilcox, Champaign

PERSONAL MEMBERS

Grace Allbaugh, Illinois State University
Michelle Boule Smith, North Central College
Andrea Giosta, Illinois Heartland Library System, Cataloging Maintenance Center
Stephanie Girardi, Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District
Victoria Martinez, Chicago Public Library
Kaitlin Mathers, Palatine Public Library District
Bridget Meyer, Mount Prospect Public Library
Mary Miller, St. Charles Public Library District
Paul Piraino, Schaumburg Township District Library
Sarah Pistilli, St. Charles Public Library District
Dorothy Pryor, Aurora Public Library District
Shay Redden, Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library District
Jerrel Reyes, Alsip-Merrionette Park Public Library District
Katie Roberts, Illinois Heartland Library System
Salvador Rocha, Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library District
Cody Roecker, Naperville Public Library
Rachel Ruetz, Algonquin Area Public Library District
Alanna Sablotny, Chatham Area Public Library District
Morgan Sedano, Indian Trails Public Library District
Anna Sielaff, Lincoln Library
Alexis Tippitt, Decatur Public Library
Jittapim Yamprai, Northern Illinois University Libraries
Amanda Young, Decatur Public Library

New Illinois Library Luminary



Ellen C. Popit is the Associate Director of the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) and has been a dedicated library proponent over the course of her 39-year career. She began her career in school and public libraries before moving to the Shawnee Library System in 1991. During her lengthy career, Popit has served as an advisor, consultant, leader, and mentor to all types of libraries and library staff.

Popit was awarded the highly selective Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Crystal Honor Award in 2020. This award is given to those who have shown distinguished support of or contributions to the school library profession, school libraries in Illinois, and/or contributions to AISLE.

Popit's influence and devotion to the Illinois library community is evidenced by her participation in several committees. She has served as a Director-at-large on the ILA Executive Board; been a member of the ILA Conference Program Committee, serving as Co-chair for the 2010 Libraries Out Loud ILA Annual Conference; served on the Serving Our Public Committee for both the 3.0 and 4.0 revisions, and served on the ILA Public Policy Committee in an Ex Officio capacity. Popit is a founding committee member of the successful Directors' University, now in its 8th year; has served on the biennial Illinois Youth Services Institute Planning Committee; has been both Chair and member of the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Book Awards; and been a Synergy and ILEAD U mentor. Popit's service further includes the Institute for School & Public Libraries, the Small Public Library Management Institute, the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee, and serving on AISLE/ISLMA's Readers' Choice Committee and Conference Committee.



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STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029



INTRODUCTION



The Illinois Library Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit, educational, and 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 a chapter of the American Library Association. ILA has more than 2,000 personal and 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries as well as librarians, library assistants, trustees, students, and library vendors.

On May 16, 2024, the ILA Executive Board voted to approve the association's strategic plan for 2024-2029.

This plan is intended to guide our focus over the next few years. It is not a "to-do list," nor is it a comprehensive description of the ILA portfolio of activities. Rather, a strategic plan is a directional document and statement of priorities for the near future.

We are so very appreciative of all those who have helped in the development of this plan by sharing with us your hopes, aspirations, praise, and constructive criticism of and for the association!

VISION, MISSION, CORE VALUES



VISION: Collaboratively shaping a strong future for libraries in Illinois.

MISSION: Advocacy, equity, learning, and engagement for the benefit of Illinois libraries.

CORE STRATEGIC VALUES

- Energizing, visionary leadership
 - Adaptation to change
 - Long-term strategic perspective/direction
 - Member service focus
 - Partnerships and alliances
 - Diversity and equity of opportunity
-

CORE STRATEGIC VALUES OF THE PROFESSION

Information access, equity, intellectual freedom, and objective truth.

STRATEGIES AND GOALS

A library resource for library professionals, ILA focuses on advocacy and education as its primary contributions to the field. ILA supports libraries throughout the state through a variety of professional development programs, such as the Noon Network, and participation in committees and forums. ILA programs and activities include legislative advocacy, the Annual Conference, Reaching Forward Conferences, Directors University, Illinois Youth Services Institute, and iREAD Summer Reading Program.

STRATEGY: ADVOCACY

GOAL: Political Advocacy

Advocate for equitable and exceptional library services for the benefit of all Illinois libraries and the communities they serve.

GOAL: Legislative Collaboration

Collaborate with stakeholders statewide in crafting and gathering support for library-positive legislation.

STRATEGY: MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into training offerings, with an emphasis on raising up marginalized library leaders throughout Illinois.

GOAL: Education

Offer diverse, equitable, and responsive educational opportunities focusing on professional development at all career stages.

GOAL: Membership

Attract and retain members via regular communication and collaboration opportunities.

STRATEGY: ILA ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

GOAL: ILA Staff

ILA will continue to focus on attracting, supporting, and retaining talented employees.

GOAL: Diversify Revenue

ILA will actively pursue a variety of revenue streams.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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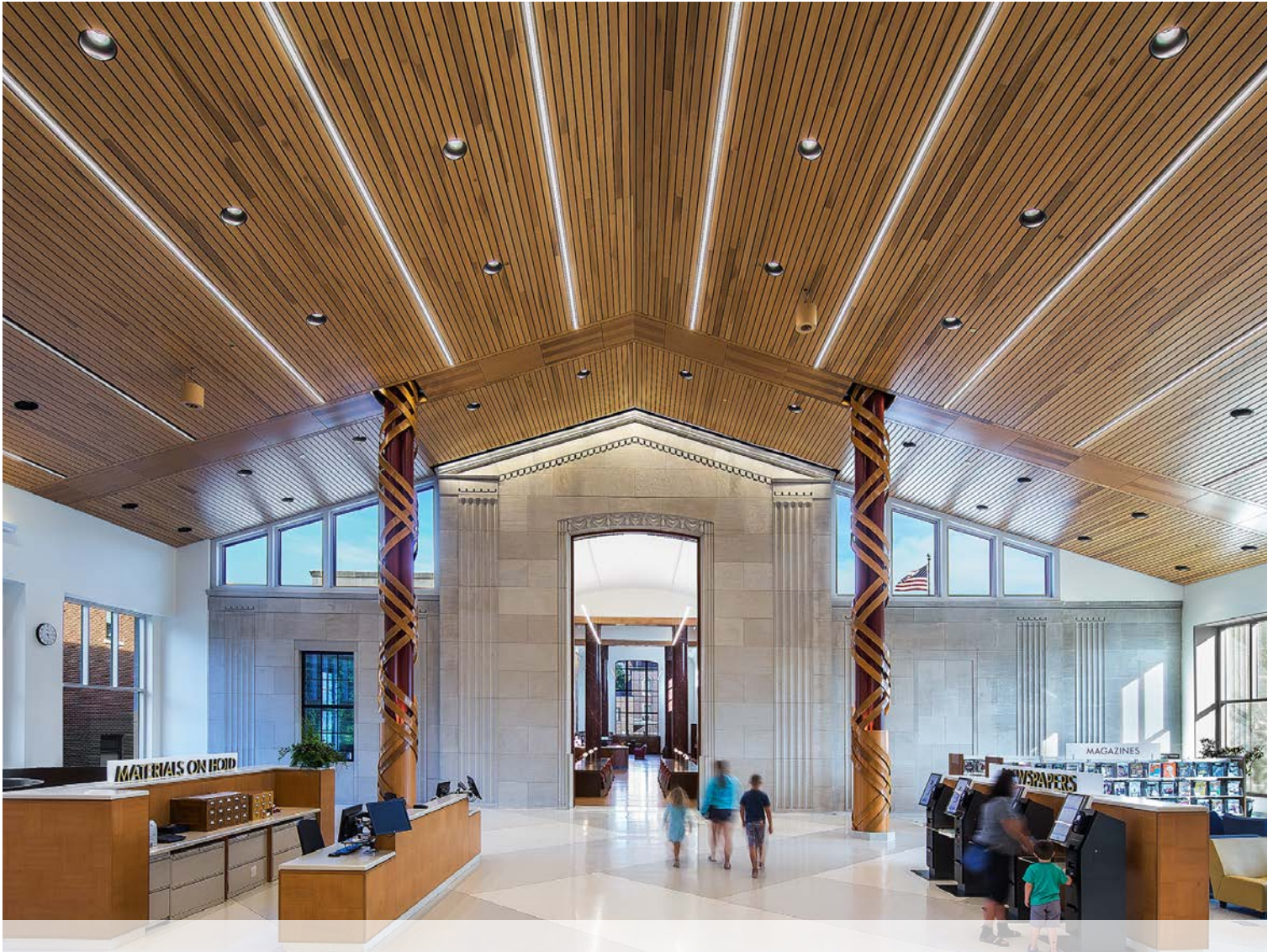
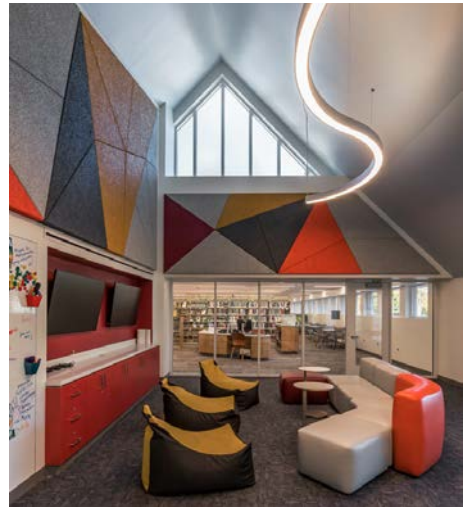
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- Articles that explore an issue, rather than promoting a particular initiative or program, with examples from more than one library or type of library
- Writing that considers a "how to think about..." approach rather than "how to do..."
- Submissions from all geographic areas of the state
- Submissions that relate to ILA's strategic goal area of a culture of diversity and inclusion, both in the profession and the association



Illinois Library Association

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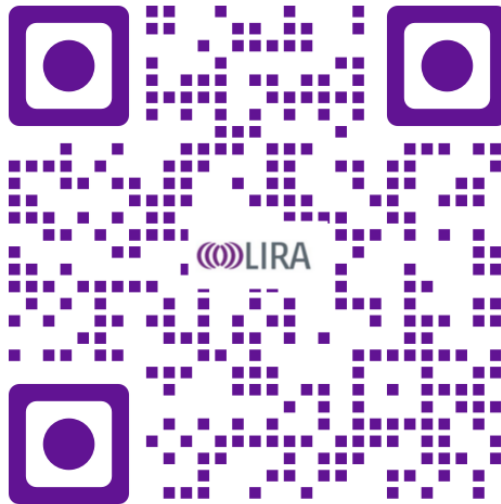

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Account Executive
630.694.5436
trevor_smith@ajg.com

Ali Sulita

Client Service Manager
630.438.1633
ali_sulita@ajg.com

Marcus Henthorn

Area Executive VP
630.694.5152
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