

REPORTER

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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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

ILA's Photo of the Week contest began a year ago, in December 2019, with the goal to showcase ILA member activities in a visual manner on our social media. Some weeks we have several submissions, some weeks only one or two, but in all cases the submitted photos provide a first-hand look at what's going on in Illinois librarianship. Featured on our cover this month is a montage of images from the past year, from the heartwarming to the humorous, and from a pre-COVID time when we could enjoy in-person programming to creative solutions to library service during the pandemic; always highlighting the remarkable things our members do every day.



The Illinois Library Association is collaboratively shaping a new 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 five 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 calendar 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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Away from the Library: How to Motivate Yourself and Your Team to Stay Engaged, Inspired, and Efficient in the Time of Working Remotely

Working from home could never work for people who work in a library—or could it? As stay-at-home orders were announced in communities across the state of Illinois and libraries closed their physical spaces back in March of 2020, library leaders found themselves putting together lists of work-from-home assignments and trying to serve their communities, but also trying to safeguard their jobs and the jobs of their employees from layoffs and furloughs, not to mention everyone's safety.

This article offers a synopsis of how several libraries handled the “working from home” phenomenon in a time of social distancing. In order to learn about the field's most pressing challenges and successes of working remotely, the authors surveyed several public and academic libraries. Based on key findings that emerged from the survey, here are tips and tools for leaders, whether library directors at small or large, academic or public libraries, on how to motivate yourself and your team when home becomes the workplace.

PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Chances are that your library team has little or no experience working from home. Providing regular, real-time communication should be your number one priority as a leader. Your team might feel isolated, disconnected from their job, and even lonely. When choosing a communication method, choose wisely and based on the message you want to convey. Don't replace a phone call with an email when checking in with an employee. Don't schedule another virtual meeting if you can get the job done via email. Consider the following communication goals, and then designate a communication method to achieve them:

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“Challenges with technology, communication, and producing quality work from home take a physical and mental toll on everyone.”



- Communication Goal #1: Provide updates and information

Strive to keep your team well informed about library happenings. The more informed your employees are, the more engaged they are. A recent change in a library policy? Make sure your team is aware of it. Another department's accomplishment resulted in great customer service? Let your team know about that. A patron praised the library collection? Share that with your team. Or, to foster a sense of community and leadership, consider weekly updates via email. The surveyed libraries found email to be the most effective communication tool for providing updates and information to their employees. Google Slides and Google Forms were described as effective methods for creating interactive forms with links to videos and questions. Google Meet and Zoom were the most preferred communication tools for virtual meetings.

- Communication Goal #2: Provide instructions and directions

Face-to-face interactions and body language are a big part of the communication process. With remote work, the inability to check-in with their boss—whose in-person office is a few feet away from their desks—can cause frustration and uncertainty for employees. Remote teams require clear instructions and directions. To avoid miscommunication and constant handholding when it comes to completing projects, consider using a communication platform that everyone is comfortable with. The survey respondents shared that in addition to virtual meetings via Zoom and Google Meet, preferred platforms for providing their teams with instructions and opportunities for remote collaboration were Basecamp, Google Docs, Slack, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, Webex, Gimlet, and WebJunction.

- Communication Goal #3: Provide reassurance and support

The survey respondents noted that while some of their employees didn't miss their daily commute and enjoyed working at their own pace during lockdown, others found working from home stressful, and felt anxious and unproductive at a time when libraries were furloughing workers. To bring pre-COVID-19 engagement levels back, library leaders provided communication support in the form of regular monthly and weekly check-ins with their employees, and also utilized some non-traditional communication methods such as texting, chat messaging through Facebook, FaceTime, phone calls and even anonymous staff surveys in order to get honest feedback from staff on reopening plans.

The Glen Ellyn Public Library set up a department buddy system, where everyone had someone checking on their well-being—another example of providing reassurance and support through frequent team communication. A respondent from Helen Plum Library puts it this way: “We are all working through the same trauma and found that it is most important that we communicate with each other and focus on what we can do as opposed to what we've had to let go of.”

SET CLEAR GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Make sure your team knows your expectations. Do you want them to check in with you once a day or once a week? Are they supposed to track their time? Have you laid down their goals, commitments and projects? According to leadership training expert Elizabeth McLeod, the root cause of poor performance is the lack of clear expectations. McLeod states “show me a leader who says, ‘I shouldn't have to tell them, it should be obvious,’ and we'll show you a team that isn't clear” (Petroni, 2018). Some of the surveyed respondents expected daily updates, while others were content with weekly briefings. All, however, said that even when they didn't have a fully formed set of goals for remote work due to the uncertainty of when libraries will reopen to the public, they still expected their teams to continue with their tasks to a certain degree. Leadership teams made changes in order to accommodate what can be done at home. Virtual programming and continuing education sessions were listed as the most common work-from-home assignments.

In terms of goals and expectations, a respondent from Wilmette Public Library said, “I collected and shared all the URLs and logins for sites we use for collection development and other tasks and made a list of suggested remote work tasks. The first few weeks the expectation was to do what you can do. I trust my team to work as much as they could in a crisis. They all stepped up and kept up with their duties from home, including translating their in-person programs to virtual ones within two weeks from closing the building.” A respondent from Sycamore Public Library adds, “We did weekly check-ins and staff kept timesheets with notations on continuing education and projects. Our expectation was to continue providing some virtual programming while we were at home. Staff were permitted to create their own hours and for the first couple of months, were expected to work half their normal hours. If they normally worked 16 hours in-library, they were expected to work 8 hours from home.”

However, letting staff create their own work hours could lead to managers having to work all the time to accommodate their teams' needs. Managers might find themselves constantly on call for answering emails and chats to keep the workflow going and to ensure a prompt response. For a healthy balance between work life and home life, consider letting staff know you would be available from nine to five, Monday through Friday, and then if they have an urgent issue, they should call or text you. At the Westmont Public Library, managers sent emails with expectations of work, where full-time staff worked half their hours and part-time staff worked one-third. Each staff member kept a log of daily work and had a document of ideas to draw from. Staff were also asked to check email three days per week for any updates.

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Survey results demonstrated that working from home brought several challenges. Technology issues were among the top challenges for staff working from home. Some staff didn't have the technology necessary to work from home. In those cases, they were allowed to use library laptops usually reserved for teaching patron classes. Leadership often had to work with the IT department to set up staff at home with Wi-Fi hotspots, as well as equipment and software needed to produce virtual library programs. Leadership also found that some staff needed some extra time to learn the technology they needed to use while working from home. One survey respondent described arriving at a creative solution for troubleshooting a technical issue that a staff member was experiencing. When screen-sharing and a phone conversation couldn't solve the problem, the respondent said, "I visited a librarian's house and showed her on her laptop outside, at a distance." Leadership also felt it was important to let staff know they were learning new technology right alongside them. "Some staff were hesitant to create video programming and needed lots of encouragement. I made one early on to show that I was right there with them in terms of learning and experimenting," said one survey respondent. In cases where staff were simply unable to work because of technology issues, duties were re-assigned and some leaders even took on extra work (like programming) because they were better equipped with technology at home.

Just getting used to working from home was challenging, even finding a dedicated space to work. Some had insufficient home workspace because they were sharing their space with other family members also working from home, or because they couldn't duplicate their office ergonomic desk setups. Other staff had issues with poor lighting and small spaces, which made it difficult to create good quality videos and virtual programs. One respondent from Glen Ellyn Public Library said, "We made sure to let everyone know that guests were always welcome in Zoom

meetings, and we normalized interruptions and asked everyone to be patient and gentle with themselves and with their colleagues." Managers realized that everyone was experiencing some sort of challenge acclimating to their new work-from-home environment and realized the importance of trusting their staff and offering them some flexibility. One respondent said, "I knew that my staff had plenty to do, and as long as it got done, I was fine with how they went about it."

Communication was more difficult, as well. For some, Zoom meetings could not replace the easy collaboration and brainstorming sessions that occur naturally when meeting in person. "We learned (and continue to learn) that collaboration takes significantly more time and isn't as organic as it was," said one respondent from the Helen Plum Library. In other cases, staff sometimes emailed or texted privately with one another and didn't always keep the team informed of changes. Managers also experienced frustration with communicating frequent changes to staff as the global situation changed and they worked hard to be transparent as possible with staff, even when they didn't have any answers, or the answers changed from one day to the next.

Challenges with technology, communication, and producing quality work from home take a physical and mental toll on everyone. Managers felt extra pressure to keep staff motivated, address their needs, and ease their anxiety. "My people were looking to me for answers and I didn't have any because the information was changing by the minute. The two months we were closed were fraught with frustration which, at times, felt like it was directed at me instead of the situation. Eventually I realized staff was looking to me more for comfort and reassurance than answers," said one respondent. Managers bolstered their staff by encouraging them to put their own health and safety first, take breaks, and set boundaries.

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BENEFITS OF WORKING REMOTELY

Once everyone settled in, the benefits of working remotely became apparent. First and foremost, everyone felt safer. Beyond that, many survey respondents said they realized they didn't miss their commute! Everyone also appreciated the added flexibility to their work schedules, which let them tend to issues at home, see more of their family, and take lunch breaks when they wanted and not at set times. The new-found flexibility had other benefits, like improved self-care. One respondent "appreciated the flexibility to take my contractual 15-minute break in watering my flowers and petting my dog." Others realized that they could participate in virtual professional development opportunities and work on projects without interruption.

As everyone became comfortable with the new technology and communication methods, workflows improved, and staff were "able to complete more work in a shorter period," according to the Glenwood-Lynwood Public Library District. Another respondent noted, "I was able to get more done at home with fewer errors. It was far easier for me to focus and have some quiet time to work." A respondent from Brookens Library at the University of Illinois Springfield said, "Meetings flow better; no one wants to stay on Zoom longer than necessary." Some staff also used this time to learn new technology to make training videos for patrons, as well as identify new services like virtual reference and drive-thru programming. New virtual services also make the library more accessible to patrons who were previously unable to come to the library. The new technology and communication methods also benefit staff. Leadership noticed improved collaboration with other departments and that new internal services like help desk tickets will help the library going forward. "This tremendous shift has forced us to reinvent everything we do, and it has fostered a lot of creativity from my team!", said one respondent.

KEEP YOUR TEAM MOTIVATED AND ENGAGED

How can you, as a leader, ensure that your team stays motivated, productive—and also inspired—while working from home? If you have already established a positive and healthy work culture inside the office, you can have confidence that your team will continue to put the same effort into completing their projects successfully working from home. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been an event that has challenged leaders to test and evolve their leadership skills. According to Hebert, "Leaders in today's environment must not only practice effective project management, decipher complex analyses, and delegate tasks, but also demonstrate people skills and understand human behavior. Using technology, being a flexible communicator, and setting clear expectations allow leaders to incorporate people skills, such as active listening, self-compassion, and empathy that creates a productive and positive workplace environment" (Hebert, 2020). Leading a team from home is different than leading from the office, and definitely more challenging. Staff who excel at the office under normal circumstances could find themselves struggling with handling remote work. Struggling staff need more attention and what you do as a leader depends on why they are struggling. Are they overwhelmed with work, technology, or meeting a deadline? Are they worried about the situation in general? A respondent from Glencoe Public Library said, "I talked to staff members every single day when everyone was at home. I checked on them as if they were in the building. We had weekly meetings where they could see each other, and one day a week we had a day where the meeting had no agenda but was just free flowing."

"As everyone became comfortable with the new technology and communication methods, workflows improved, and staff were able to complete more work in a shorter period."



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In terms of helping staff who struggled, a respondent from the Cullom-Davis Library at Bradley University shared, “I kept a virtual ‘open door’ so I could help employees prioritize work, determine when outside help was needed, or when collaboration with another employee would be helpful. I kept in mind that my team are people first, employees second.” Be empathetic and honest. Don’t sugarcoat the situation, because “hiding information, even if its bad news, can cause more anxiety. Be open about the evolving nature of the problem. It’s OK to say, ‘I don’t know’” (Mysliwy, 2020). In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, nearly everything about library work has changed. Reassure your team that things don’t have to be perfect. Remind them that while change is scary, it is also an opportunity to improve and redesign services.

To boost employee morale and team spirit while working from home, some libraries brought humor and fun into their virtual meetings. A staff member from Glen Ellyn Public Library said that as they met weekly as a department, they made sure to have fun theme weeks: Bring your pet, wear a fun hat, show us your snacks. They also talked about what they were reading and viewing, had remote cocktail hours and trivia contests and sent funny GIFs to each other. But the best thing for staff morale is leadership that actually demonstrates that staff safety and well-being is a priority.

A respondent from the Wilmette Public Library said, “Our director led the way by giving staff flexibility and trust. When planning our reopening procedures, he took every question or concern seriously and addressed every one of them. My staff know there won’t be consequences for being honest and direct with me about any concerns that they have.”

TIPS FOR TEAM LEADERS TO STAY INSPIRED

While leaders focus primarily on serving others, they need to practice the same self-care they are likely encouraging employees to do. “Making time to tend to your own physical and emotional needs is important because it allows us—no matter where we are on the organizational chart—to refuel and bring our best and most authentic selves to work” (Mysliwy, 2020). It is important to remember that you don’t have to deal with everything directly. Instead, “share the load” and “assemble a team with the right qualities to execute a uniform message” (Mysliwy, 2020). Ensure that, as a leader, you are a part of the collaborative work with your employees to help you remember that you are all in this together, whatever the challenge.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Increased Coverage and Limits
- More Control
- Decreased Cost
- Return on Surplus
- Safety and Training Programs
- Fully Transparent

MEMBER TESTIMONIAL

“Because of my association with LIRA, I am a more sophisticated professional and steward for the library and community. I’ve learned more than I had in almost 30 years working in libraries about safeguarding community assets as a direct result of my involvement with LIRA. Hopefully, additional Illinois libraries will come to understand LIRA is more than insurance; it’s a community pulling for each other, contributing to a greater good, and ensuring all are stronger, safer, smarter, and better as a result.”

– Tina Hubert, Six Mile Public Library

For additional information visit www.lirapool.com

Communicate with your staff but also with other managers. “Find a colleague you can hit up when you’re feeling the need to chat with someone. Alternatively, buddy up with a friend who works elsewhere and is going through the same experience” (Austin, 2020). For example, a respondent from the Glen Ellyn Public Library shared that she reached out to other department heads for support and idea sharing. If you struggle as a manager, reach out to your boss. Check in to make sure you are on the same page. “Being able to openly communicate with my manager and staff members really helped. My manager gave me clear expectations of what she wanted me to do and my goal for the year had been to grow strength as a leader, and this time really helped me become more confident in being a leader,” said a staff member from River Forest Public Library.

In her article “Tips to Stay Healthy While Working from Home” in the *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, Kris Rich recognizes that being isolated from co-workers and friends, as well as the disruption from regular working routine, can bring anxiety and stress no matter what your position is within the organization. Rich writes about several ways to stay physically and mentally healthy while working from home, such as setting a schedule, taking breaks from computer work, creating a dedicated work area, and staying connected with friends and co-workers. But for managers, perhaps the most important tip that Rich gives is setting work boundaries as “It can be difficult to separate your work life from your personal life when they are under the same roof” (Rich, 2020). This can be difficult as you might find yourself giving support, reassurance, and instructions to your team at all hours of the day. If you find yourself skipping lunch in order to finish a task or to answer one more email, create a reasonable schedule for yourself and make sure you stick to it. Respondents from various libraries shared that some things that have been helpful to them throughout working from home have been playing music, going outside for a walk, gardening, reading inspiring poetry, crafting, prioritizing projects, and focusing on the positives.

To stay inspired even when times are hard, a respondent from Helen Plum Library puts it this way: “I love my job and choose to work at my local library. I am privileged to serve my neighbors, my friends, and my children’s classmates. I work with fantastic people who bring a range of skills and talents to our team. I remind myself of why I do this, who I’m doing it for and choose to focus on what I can do each day even if it’s small. We are universally less connected right now; it’s critical that we accept that we are all struggling, support our own mental health and connect to each other in whatever way is possible.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remote work is likely to be the norm for a while. Clear and effective communication keeps staff informed and delivers direction. Staff feel less isolated and more confident in their roles, and you’re kept informed about ongoing projects. Reach out to your own manager and communicate openly about your own needs. Finally, practice the same advice you offer staff—be patient with yourself, set boundaries, take breaks and try to stay healthy! ■

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- Submissions from all geographic areas of the state
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Illinois Library Association

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and consider sharing your ideas! Send submissions to ila@ila.org.

Libraries to the Rescue: Providing Homeschooling Support During a Pandemic

Homeschoolers rely on the resources that public libraries offer to meet their educational and social needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has made helping homeschoolers challenging for libraries even while homeschoolers need more support than ever. Librarians and other professionals across the state have noticed an increase in homeschoolers since the beginning of the school year, as well as the addition of remote schoolers—those “attending” an external school, even if most or all of the learning is currently being conducted virtually—looking for extra support. Sixty percent of respondents surveyed by the author have noticed an increase in homeschoolers since the pandemic began. “Parents need a plan and need to be able to map out the year,” said Jennifer Cernich of Riverton Village Library, “Homeschooling lets them do this so they can work.” There are ways that libraries can be both supportive and welcoming towards homeschoolers within the community, even during a pandemic. Libraries can learn what is working for others and take simple steps to make homeschoolers feel supported.

BOOKS

Books are a great starting point when thinking about adding homeschooling resources to a library collection. Most libraries simply have books that are suitable for children and parents regardless of their homeschool status. Some libraries have books specifically targeted towards homeschooling families. There are books that describe different philosophies that are helpful for those getting started. “We have books to help parents to homeschool their children, but no curriculum materials,” said Brandi Smits

from Orland Park Public Library. “We felt that the parents would need them longer than the checkout time and would be better served purchasing their own copies.” Curriculum materials can be costly and take up a lot of space, though some libraries have made this a priority. “We have an entire Homeschool Resource Center that we established in 2001 that families from all over the state travel to Johnsburg to visit,” said Beth Ryan of Johnsburg Public Library. This resource center was funded with a grant in 2001 that enabled them to convert a study room into the center.

Other ideas for helpful books include how-to books for parents at every level, books on how to homeschool, and books on different styles of homeschooling. Homeschoolers and their families can also be directed towards information on loaning books from other libraries within the Illinois systems as well as interlibrary loans. Many libraries have parenting or teaching collections that also include materials helpful to homeschoolers. “We have a ‘Parent’ section we incorporated for our homeschool families that has specific literature on homeschooling and options for supplementing curriculum,” said Isabel La Barbera of Berkeley Public Library. “There is also a bin of books and educational games that is kept out of our collection specifically for those families participating in the yearly homeschooling program we offer; families share those resources.” Librarians have to build a collection based upon the needs of their specific community. “We do have some guides for homeschoolers in our parent and teacher section, but we do not have a section especially for them,” said Caitlin Bergan of Glenview Public Library, “We find that a wide variety of parents are interested in supplementing learning at home, so even before COVID, we kept a robust nonfiction section, including work books.”

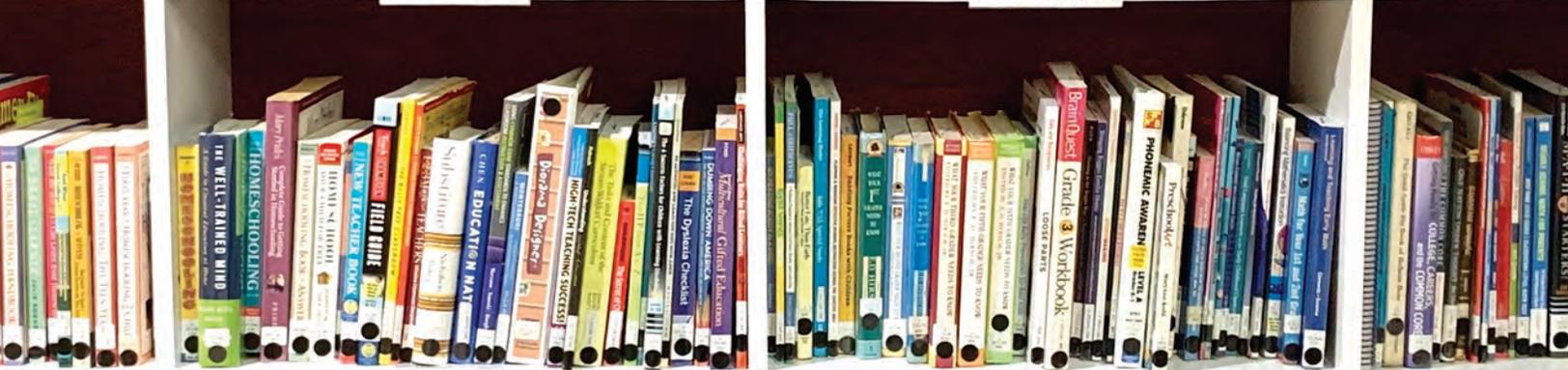
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JUVENILE TEACHING & PARENTING



↑ Juv. Teaching - Subjects ↑

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DIGITAL RESOURCES

Libraries provide subscriptions to their patrons for services that they might not be able to access otherwise. Educational apps such as Tynker, Khan Academy Kids, and ABCmouse are provided in some libraries with free subscriptions or access for patrons. Evergreen Park Public Library offers their patrons Brainfuse, a tutoring service that provides help with such things as writing papers and doing homework. LaGrange Park Public Library offers reference and history databases, readers advisory databases, Mango for Foreign language learning, and Tumblebooks which provides a variety of e-books for children and teens. Many libraries have ebooks and audiobooks available from apps such as hoopla digital, Libby, and cloudLibrary. There are even research databases geared towards children and young adults.

The Urbana Free Library offers access to databases including Early World of Learning, Novelist K-8 Plus, and World Book Kids. “We have a wide range of digital resources for patrons, including eBooks; eAudiobooks; Live Homework Help from Tutor.com; Mango Languages; research databases; and streaming through Hoopla, Kanopy, and Acorn TV,” said Lorrie Hansen of Skokie Public Library. The goal is to find a combination of digital resources that meets the needs of a specific community and fits in with the libraries overall budget. Digital resources do not have to be purchased specifically for the homeschooling community but homeschoolers can be directed towards them.

HANDS-ON MATERIALS

Homeschoolers need hands-on materials to engage them in learning. Libraries can help offset this cost by offering a variety of circulating materials that homeschoolers can use. This can include math manipulatives, STEAM kits, literacy kits, preschool kits, maps, science equipment, educational games, IDNR nature resource backpacks, and more. “We have a variety of kits including literacy and math, and science equipment like 3D models, telescopes, and microscopes for checkout,” said Lauren Chambers of the Urbana Free Library. “We also have a collection of musical instruments that can be checked out ranging from a keyboard to sets of small drums, bells, and guitars. Instruments are packaged with learning materials like teacher guides.”

STEAM materials can be particularly cost prohibitive for families, so some libraries purchase these items to be circulated. The Matteson Area Public Library has Dash Robot, 3D pens, Cubelets, Snap Circuits, and microscopes available. STEAM kits are a way that libraries can create learning experiences for their younger patrons. Skokie Public Library has STEAM kits on such subjects as robotics, music, measurement, fossils, coding,

and more, with accompanying short YouTube videos that provide an overview of the kits. Circulation of these items vary depending on the library, with some allowing them to be borrowed by those with reciprocal access and others only allowing cardholders to use the materials.

LIBGUIDES OR RESOURCE PAGES

Many libraries do not have room for an entire section dedicated to homeschooling but can bring together all of their available resources by creating a guide or resource page. These types of guides are often digital, which is especially helpful during a pandemic, but can also be found as a handout within the library. Elmhurst Public Library has a page on their website titled “Homeschool Resources at EPL” outlining programs, websites, Illinois resources, and magazines geared towards homeschoolers. Carol Stream Public Library’s homeschooling resources web page also includes available books on the subject of homeschooling that can be found within the catalog and checked out. The Carbondale Public Library has links to various digital resources, books, events, and organizations. “We have a page on our website that has homeschooling curriculum guides, books for homeschooling parents, homeschooling methods, legal resources for homeschoolers, and local homeschooling groups,” says Brandi Smits of Orland Park Public Library, “We also made informational Homeschooling 101 videos that are available on the webpage.” Libraries can easily put together a guide for homeschoolers highlighting the resources in their library as well as resources for the greater community in which they live.

PROGRAMMING

Library programming helps fill a need in the homeschooling community for socialization and educational activities. Some libraries offer programming for homeschoolers while others include homeschoolers in their overall programming for children and young adults. “We offer programming twice weekly for our homeschool families,” said Kary Henry of Deerfield Public Library, “One program is for children ages 7-10, and the other is for children ages 11-14. These programs are of three varieties: Homeschool Hangout (social time, games, escape rooms, etc.), Homeschool Book Club (Bluestem and Caudill book clubs for the Illinois Readers’ Choice Awards), and Homeschool @ the Library (curricular-based programs).”

Project Next Generation (PNG), a grant-funded initiative by the Illinois Secretary of State for children age, has been used by many homeschooling families as a way to supplement STEAM. During the pandemic many libraries have brought PNG online

in a virtual format. The Carbondale Public Library has been using Zoom and Discord as a way for older children and teens to connect. YouTube videos of activities along with technology items being checked out provide a way for PNG to continue while in-person programs are on hold.

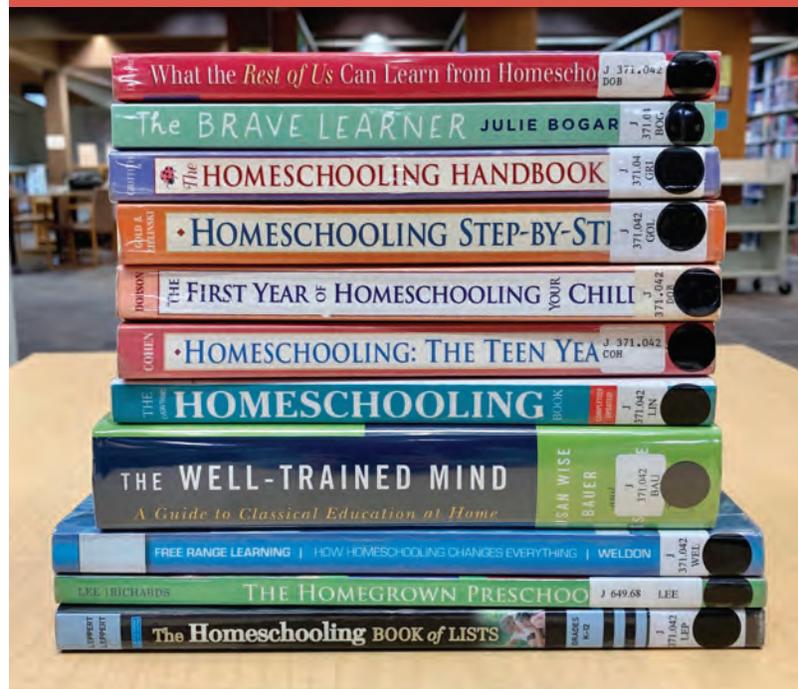
Younger children can enjoy virtual crafts and story times online with their favorite librarians. “Our library’s YouTube channel features librarian storytimes, BOOMbox at Home activities, book chats, and other educational videos that may be of interest to homeschool families,” said Lorrie Hansen of Skokie Public Library. Many performers brought their children’s programming virtual, which has allowed families to enjoy them from home. Downer’s Grove Public Library has offered virtual puppet shows, for example. Reading challenges are another tool that libraries are using to keep homeschoolers and other patrons actively reading while they are spending more time at home. The homeschooling community benefits from a wide variety of programs on different topics offered for various age ranges.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups for homeschoolers and their caregivers have provided a lifeline for many during the COVID-19 pandemic. These groups can take place online via Zoom or another video conferencing service to provide connection and resources to parents. Aside from the time and staff needed to set up and moderate a group, this can be a fairly easy way to offer support to the homeschooling community. “We recently produced a series of three Homeschooling 101 videos to support families exploring the learning options for their children. Our library is also offering a weekly Zoom Homeschool Discussion group for parents,” said Monica Dzierzbicki of Indian Prairie Public Library District.

Some caregivers are considering homeschooling for the first time and don’t know where to start. A support group can be helpful during the transition into a new way of educating children. “We definitely have had people consider it for the first time since they were in effect going to be homeschooling anyway,” said Beth Ryan of Johnsburg Public Library. “Our volunteer holds informative programs bi-monthly. Pre-COVID she averaged 8-12 people; this summer she had upwards of 125 participants at most sessions (held via Zoom).” Holly Eberle of Algonquin Area Public Library District created a ‘Homeschool for Newcomers’ YouTube video to provide support. “My webinar has the most views of all of AAPLD’s virtual programs,” said Eberle, “In August, a significant percentage of the reference questions I took and overheard my colleagues taking were regarding homeschooling options and non-public school options.”

“Other ideas for helpful books include how-to books for parents at every level, books on how to homeschool, and books on different styles of homeschooling.”



FINAL THOUGHTS

Helping homeschoolers does not require a huge budget or a staff person with specific skills, but rather the knowledge that homeschoolers exist in every community and might need extra support during this time. Being aware of the needs of the homeschoolers in your community and working to address those needs can go a long way in creating long-lasting relationships. Keep homeschoolers on your radar and they will reward you with lifelong library use. 📖

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the various libraries who took the time to share their experiences for this article.

#WeWereHere: A Project of the ILA Young Adult Services Forum

History certainly doesn't repeat, but it often rhymes. —Mark Twain (purportedly)

The 1920s came roaring in, riding the wave of a pandemic and economic upheaval. YA librarian pioneer Margaret A. Edwards won't get hired until 1932 and Young Adult Services as we know it doesn't yet exist. We don't have a great account of teens' lives in the 1920s, simply because no one bothered to record it.

The 2020s are on pace to be even more disruptive but not at all positive. While libraries may not be able to stop the pandemic, the #WeWereHere Project can give a voice to the current generation of teens by capturing and recording their thoughts and feelings, volunteer work, and positive impact on their communities.

THE NEED

Every teen librarian both loves and loathes summer. It's our busy time when the only thing teen patrons seem to have is free time. Program attendance goes up, the summer reading program monster rears its head, and teens you've never seen before come with the mantra, "I need service hours."

Schaumburg Township District Library sees a lot of teen volunteers. The community has many organizations and initiatives that require service hours. Pre-COVID, the Library hosted three 2-hour volunteer programs a month during the school year, which doubled in the summer. And the Library's Summer Volunteer Squad offered teens even more volunteer opportunities. Every one of those programs filled to capacity, there were regularly 30+ teens in attendance. Losing in-person meetings was devastating to our Library's volunteer opportunities and we needed a solution.

The #WeWereHere Project concept was brought to the Illinois Library Association Young Adult Services Forum and it transformed from just a way for libraries to give teens volunteer hours to also giving teens a voice about the bizarre, frustrating, and historic year of 2020 and beyond.

The #WeWereHere Project now serves as a repository of the current teen experience since their lives are truly unlike those of any other generation of teens. Because this type of record keeping is critical to documenting our past, it only made sense to allow teens to earn service hours by sharing their experiences, like a video diary or artwork, or by detailing any community projects they completed.

[continued on page 18]



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THE PLATFORM

In the early stage of the quarantine (when we thought the pandemic would be a two-week thing!), everything at our Library was canceled, including our Teen Place Mentor program where high schoolers teach drop-in computer science and coding courses to middle school students. With our newfound downtime, Schaumburg Township District Library Teen Place Manager Joe Marcantonio brought the project to Rayaana Siddiqi, a Teen Place Mentor with a penchant for designing websites. They initially considered using social media but quickly decided that a website would be the best platform for both teens and librarians to access and utilize the project.

Rayaana created the website and was responsible for many of the user interface developments. He added a library portal which contains sample documents, a how-to guide for libraries to use the project, and promotional materials. He gave viewers in the community the ability to like and comment on teen experience posts to keep the social element of the project.



How it works for teens:

- A teen creates their reaction to living during 2020 or volunteers their time to help their community.
- They submit a record of their work to the #WeWereHere website via a Google form or send the project to their participating library to submit for them.
- On the form, they include how many hours they worked on the project.
- The project is posted to the #WeWereHere website.
- The teen receives a letter of service signing off on the hours they have volunteered.

How it works for libraries:

- A library registers with the site and promotes the project to their teens.
- Once registered, the library is listed as a partner on the website and gains access to sample press releases, sample service hours records, and the #WeWereHere logo for their own marketing.
- The library accepts teens' projects and either helps them to post to the #WeWereHere website or posts on the teens' behalf.
- The library signs the students' service hour paperwork or gives them a letter stating the number of hours volunteered.
- The project is posted to the #WeWereHere website showcasing the teens' accomplishment.



Your Library Can Partner with #WeWereHere!

To date, more than 30 libraries have helped their teen chronicle their daily lives, experiences, and creativity via #WeWereHere. Teens can gain virtual service hours and have a platform to express themselves, and library staff can do the necessary work remotely. To become a partner, please visit thewewerehereproject.org and register on the "Community Partners" page. You will be asked to provide basic information about your name, library, and role; and the capacity for you or the person directly responsible for working with teen volunteers to offer virtual service hours for teens who participate. Join the libraries listed below and offer your teens an innovative and timely opportunity (libraries are in Illinois unless otherwise noted):

Albert Wisner Public Library (NY)
Algonquin Area Public Library District
Antioch Public Library District
Batavia Public Library
Berwyn Public Library
Byron Public Library
Des Plaines Public Library
Dunlap Public Library
Edwardsville Public Library
Elmwood Park Public Library
Forest Park Public Library
Fountaindale Public Library District
Glen Ellyn Public Library
Helen Plum Library
Homer Township Public Library
Indian Prairie Public Library
La Grange Park Public Library District
Marquette Heights Public Library
Moorestown Public Library (IN)
Niles-Maine District Library
Oak Lawn Public Library
Oregon Public Library District
Orland Park Public Library
Oswego Public Library District
Park Ridge Public Library
Plainfield Public Library District
Richton Park Public Library District
Schaumburg Township District Library
Six Mile Regional Library District
Skokie Public Library
Summit Free Public Library (NJ)
Vernon Area Public Library
Wheaton Public Library
White Oak Library District
Wilmette Public Library



THE RESULTS

For the teens who have found their way to the project, #WeWereHere has been a huge success, well beyond its origins at Schaumburg. There are more than 30 shared experiences ranging from reactionary essays to sports shows to documenting protests to crafting masks for others, grouped into the categories "I Am Here," "I Am Helping," "I Am Okay," and "I Am Not Okay." Teens shared poignant and often humorous first-hand accounts of turning awareness of privilege into motivation to volunteer; discovering a silver lining to quarantine when friends deepened their connection to one another through online gaming deep into the night; the pain of experiencing racial microaggressions from peers, and many more.

Not all the entries are narratives: A pencil sketch of a person smiling on the outside but keeping painful thoughts on the inside and a photo from a small Black Lives Matter protest are particularly evocative of this difficult period in time, and teens also submitted poetry, videos, and memes they created.

As for libraries, the #WeWereHere Project currently has more than 30 library partnerships across the state of Illinois, and including a handful of out-of-state libraries in Indiana, New York, and New Jersey, along with several schools hosting or facilitating the project in some way. We hope to grow the project and add more contributors, giving more teens the opportunity to be heard.

Most important, we're creating a record of teens' lives in the 2020s as they are happening. And we'll always have that record to look back on and learn from. Learn more and view the #WeWereHere entries at thewewerehereproject.org. 

2020 Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholars

Since 2003, ILA has honored former ILA President Sylvia Murphy Williams by awarding ILA Annual Conference scholarships and a one-year membership to the Association to ALA Spectrum Scholars who live in Illinois or who are attending graduate programs in library and information science in Illinois, thanks to support from a fund established in honor of Williams, 2002 ILA President, now known as the Diversity Scholarship Fund. ILA Williams Scholars are also connected with mentors via ILA's Diversity Committee. This year, we are pleased to welcome 15 Williams Scholars to Illinois librarianship! Several of them contributed these inspiring comments about what motivated them to become librarians, favorite courses in graduate school, professional goals, hopes for the library profession, and anything else they'd like to share. We welcome all of them as future members of the profession.



Megdelawit Abebe



Alex Aspiazu



Danielle Luz Belanger



María del Carmen Cifuentes



Tacia Díaz



Amanda He



Kyra Lee



Luisa Leija



Krystal Madkins



Anthony Martinez



Ashley Mitchell



Chinyere E. Oteh



Rayyon Robinson



Mayra Rosas



Mimosa Shah

Alex Aspiazu

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

Regarding becoming a librarian, I am honestly more surprised at myself that it took me this long to get here: This is my second career and I honestly am so grateful to be a little older and wiser and to have come into library work with a strong sense of identity. I spent a lot of time thinking about what I wanted to do next, and when the answer came to me, doors started flinging open and I knew it was the right decision. It's so hard to choose a favorite course! It might be bookbinding, because I have always had a deep regret that I did not insist on going to art school when I was young. In my bookbinding class, I get to flex those artist muscles but also learn about the intimate inner workings of books and their history. I serendipitously fell into children's work and I have zero regrets; it is now my professional goal. It fits my personality perfectly and sometimes I can't even believe that I get paid to do such fun things! My hopes for the library profession include my belief that we are a secretly subversive bunch who are effecting social change from the stacks. I would like to see us grow more diverse and inclusive, and to push the envelope more in terms of our collective activism. Silence and neutrality only work to serve the oppressor.

Danielle Luz Belanger

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

My most formative college experience took place in a stranger's living room in the industrial suburb of Pittsburg, California, ten miles from my childhood home. Months of diligent research led me to this living room and as I sat before a trove of nineteenth-century photographs spread across a dining table with my unwieldy, borrowed scanner in tow, I reveled in the fruits of my persistence.

I was writing about a largely unknown Chinese American art photographer and civil rights activist for my senior honors thesis and this living room, which belonged to a descendent of the artist, was one of the only places where I could find the information I was seeking. Humbled by the wealth of information in front of me—information that could be analyzed, interpreted, and tethered together to fill the gaps of a history that, as I had painstakingly learned, remained markedly partial to white hegemonic culture—this experience would leave a deep impression on me, and one which would eventually bring me to pursue graduate education in library and information science at UIUC.

Understanding how inclusivity and accessibility work in tandem with one another has been crucial to my development as a professional, student, and community organizer. Driven by a desire to preserve subjugated perspectives and voices, my intersection with library and information science is informed by an optimism for building a more equitable future.

María del Carmen Cifuentes

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

I initially came to librarianship during a period of transition after many years in the field of translation and interpretation at a pediatric hospital in California. As a language access professional, I was committed to reducing the communication barriers to healthcare faced by a culturally and linguistically diverse patient population. A part-time bilingual position at a public library in Illinois introduced me to the transformative potential of libraries. I was able to pivot my previous experience toward building relationships with Spanish-speaking/bilingual and Latinx community members in an effort to develop library programs and services responsive to community needs. I soon realized that I wanted to make public libraries my career home.

Motivated and challenged by the power of libraries as community spaces, I joined the Addison Public Library's adult services department and started the online MSLIS program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign earlier this year. Whether through teaching, reference, readers' advisory or community engagement, I believe that each interaction with patrons can be a step toward building trust in libraries as institutions of access, education, and empowerment. In my current role, I have also received the Department of Justice partial accreditation and am able to assist with limited immigration services, including DACA and green card renewals, and citizenship applications. While it is frontline community work that inspires me, I have learned that to make a difference, one must also have the ability to effect institutional change. To influence and shape policy and develop libraries that reflect and respond to the needs of our communities, it is also necessary to prepare for leadership roles.

I am grateful to the Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholarship for introducing me to several opportunities offered by the ILA. The recent ILA Virtual Conference offered numerous excellent sessions, and it was inspiring to learn from the work of library and community professionals. As a new member of ILA's Students and New Professionals Forum (SANP), I have started to network with other Illinois colleagues, and we are preparing a three-part Career Pathway Talk Series that will introduce new professionals to various avenues of librarianship. Mentorship from a Spectrum Scholar was pivotal in my decision to embrace librarianship. By continuing to work and build community through ILA and Spectrum, I hope to also be a source of support and encouragement for my colleagues and future librarians of color as we develop inclusive, equitable, and accessible services for the diverse communities we serve.

Tacia Díaz

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

I am still deciding what becoming a librarian will mean for me. I am invested in this field, in any case, and that was solidified in my time working in my undergraduate institution's special collections and in our multicultural resource center as a program coordinator. Getting to be with such great people in those spaces opened up new possibilities for me. In terms of how to be a person dedicated to your own growth, to learning and seeing your neighbors, and also, in terms of how to pursue scholarly interests to meaningful ends, they modeled for me just how real the impact of research and documentation can be for recognizing ourselves and how we can use that for healing—for interrupting harm even. The library as a place became more obviously a creative space. That interests me. That is a space where I think I can be of the most use and that will be of the most use for me.

It's hard to identify a favorite course in library school; I'm only a few weeks in! But I'm loving Professor Melissa Wong's course, Instructional Strategies and Techniques for Information Professionals. She's a brilliant and kind professor. The course feels so necessary and the questions she's having us ask and try to answer feel applicable to such a wide range of roles. I would like to further explore art librarianship, archives, and academic libraries. Mobile libraries also are very compelling. More than anything else at the moment though, I want to spend some time overseas in international cultural heritage institutions. Not to continue any imposition of American ideas, but rather to learn more about different practices and better understand how all our work informs one another.

I haven't had the chance to attend an ILA Annual Conference yet, but I am hoping my ILA membership will put me in closer conversation with the people more immediately around me doing this kind of work. For the library profession, I hope we can move forward in truly decentering whiteness and reckon with its many-faced roles in legitimizing settler-colonialism. I hope we can get more creative and do better sooner than later.

Amanda He

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

Libraries have always had a major presence in my life. Like many others, I grew up going to my neighborhood public library. My neighborhood was heavily influenced by gang violence at the time, so I viewed the library as a safe space filled with shelves of other worlds that were a little friendlier than where I was. I love that libraries are intended to be safe spaces for everyone and provide resources to help people for free. This guiding principle taught me to be empathetic and inspired me to want to make the world a better place, which led to volunteering with nonprofit organizations and eventually pursuing a degree in biology. While working as a research assistant in a microbiology lab, I also started working as a reference desk intern as an undergraduate student. I loved helping patrons find resources they needed to conduct their research or engaging in discussions to help them find a research topic of interest. There weren't as many STEM students utilizing the resources, so I was especially excited when I got to randomly help my classmates find the articles they needed or teach them about all the databases outside of PubMed available to them through the library. After working in the STEM field as a researcher for a couple of years, I found myself returning to the libraries as a cataloging assistant. Not too long afterwards, I knew I wanted to move forward in the library field.

In the future, I hope to pursue a career in academic libraries. I want to provide students of color with representation and be a support system to all patrons. I especially hope to be a supportive resource to BIPOC and first-generation students. I didn't see many librarians or educators that looked like me or had my background growing up and in college. Representation is so important in shaping minds and opinions, which makes me incredibly thankful to be given the opportunity to be a part of both the Spectrum and ILA communities. I'm excited for the opportunity to attend the ILA conference for the first time ever and to get the chance to learn more about the current state of affairs and existing projects to make libraries more accessible and inclusive. Thank you to the ILA for accepting me into its community and I hope everyone is doing well as 2020 draws to a close!

“I love that libraries are intended to be safe spaces for everyone and provide resources to help people for free. This guiding principle taught me to be empathetic and inspired me to want to make the world a better place.”

Kyra Lee

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

My first real introduction to librarianship occurred when I began volunteering at my local library, assisting with one of their many children's programs. I loved spending my time there, reading to elementary school children and promoting reading literacy. I went on to study creative writing in college because I've always been passionate about youth literature that's diverse and wanted to see that reflected on library shelves. That passion has led me to where I am today, in library school and actively working to make our field more diverse.

I'm only two classes in so far, so it's hard to identify a favorite course, but both courses have been extremely valuable. However, if I had to choose, my heart lies with my social justice in youth literature class. I have loved every single reading assignment and am happy to learn about/explore titles that feature children from all types of backgrounds. It's important and necessary

that we're promoting stories that allow every child to see themselves reflected as the main character and reaffirm that their experiences are valid. Ultimately, I would love to continue my career in the public library setting, specifically within youth services.

I am very excited to attend this year's conference! There's a lot of sessions focused around equity, diversity, and inclusion which I am happy to see and excited to engage with during the conference. I really want to make the most of my membership with ILA. I hope to join one of the many committees and network with other library professionals across Illinois. Regarding my hopes for the library profession, I simply want to serve my community to the best of my ability. I'm very thankful to the Illinois Library Association and the American Library Association for all the work they're doing to encourage more students of color to pursue librarianship. I am overjoyed with the amount of support I have received, and I look forward to journey ahead!

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Luisa Leija

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

I came to librarianship through the suggestion of my sister Bea Leija, who had recently begun working as library assistant herself. I had been interacting with libraries over the years as a young person, student, and first-time parent but I had never seen librarianship as a possible career path. It was so outside of the realm of possibility that it never even crossed my mind as a profession. I had relocated twice for my partner's job after our son was born and was looking for part-time work in places I had yet to grow my professional network. It was my sister who first saw that I would be perfect for the library space, given that I had already studied and served the community successfully in my previous career as a youth development professional. Upon her suggestion, I applied and was offered to work as a part-time library assistant. I realized that the type of work done in libraries is very similar to the work I had been doing with youth and communities in an outside-of-school day setting. I witnessed the lack of diversity in the field and felt that I had something not only valuable to offer but much needed.

My favorite class so far is Make-Design-Learn in Libraries. I love that we get the opportunity to make things while reflecting critically on who is represented or not represented in the makerspaces. We also learn how to engage with design thinking frameworks to ensure community informed visioning and planning of makerspaces in libraries. My professional goal is to become a youth or community services librarian, or work in international librarianship.

This will be my first time attending the ILA conference. So far, I'm impressed with the outreach to BIPOC library students. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that. I hope to learn more from the vast experiences ILA members share. I'm particularly interested in any work people are doing in the areas of critical librarianship and anti-racist approaches in library and information science.

It is my hope that the field actively aids in creating systemic changes by recruiting BIPOC library students and creating opportunities for on-going anti-racist professional development. It's critical that librarians reflect upon the field's responsibility to expand our cultural competency, vocabulary, and understanding around the vast experiences of anyone belonging to a marginalized community. I hope we move away from models of inclusion that focus on tokenizing, stereotyping, and approaching differences as deficits. With all the information tools at our disposal, I know we can do better.

Krystal Madkins

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

Libraries have been an important part of my life for as long as I can remember but I only decided to become a librarian about three years ago. It was a slow process, but it began when I took a workshop called Managing Your Career that helps people assess their strengths and interests and discover next steps in their career development. I came away with a greater understanding that I enjoy sharing information with others and helping people to access information and problem solve. Through research into library and information science and informational interviews with librarians, I eventually realized that librarianship offered a wonderful opportunity to marry my interests and experience in health research to the fulfillment I feel from being of service to others.

I'm still early in my program, but so far, my favorite classes have been Introduction to Bibliographic Metadata where I learned the basics of cataloging and Reference and Information Services where I am currently learning how to do reference work. Both classes teach skills that are foundational to librarianship and highlight the need to challenge the perceptions of cataloging and reference work as neutral activities.

My goal is to become a health sciences subject specialist in an academic library. I have a background in public health and currently work on HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention programs for sexual and gender minority young adults. I would like to assist faculty and students with their health-related research and also do my own research on sexual health topics. I am interested in working with marginalized and underserved communities, and also curious about the ways that researchers can do a better job to disseminate research findings and encourage health literacy among communities that have been harmed by systemic discrimination.

I am looking forward to the ILA Conference and hearing from the fantastic lineup of speakers and presentations. Even though it is being held virtually, I also am excited to e-meet fellow Illinois Spectrum Scholars and ILA members. Through my ILA membership, I hope to learn about the work that is being done by librarians in Illinois and to meet fellow students and practicing librarians. I also hope to make the most of training and professional development opportunities provided by ILA. For example, I am very excited to participate in the mentorship program offered to Spectrum Scholars. I also believe that being a part of this community will be valuable especially as we all remain distanced from each other during the pandemic.

The library profession has a complicated history as a space that both replicates yet challenges harmful social structures. My hope is that the profession puts in the work to help dismantle these social structures and promote the wellbeing of patrons. I also believe that one of the strengths of the library profession is its interdisciplinary nature and ability to connect the work being done in libraries with wider societal issues. I hope that the profession nurtures these strengths and gives space for upcoming librarians to innovate and encourage continuous progress in librarianship.

I am honored to be a recipient of the Sylvia Murphy Williams Award and grateful for the mentorship and development opportunities offered by ILA. It is heartening to be so warmly welcomed into the Illinois library community and I look forward to building relationships with other members.

Anthony Martinez

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

While I'd long admired public libraries, the thought of working in one didn't occur to me until I started volunteering at my local county library after a recent move. I thought it'd be a great way to meet new people and learn about my new home, but it ended up being so much more as shelving DVDs turned into serving on a committee which then led to becoming a trustee. With each step I fell more in love with the library's work until finally I realized I wanted to do even more and become a librarian myself.

Having only just started library school a couple months ago, I have a lot to learn about the field and want to be open to everything, but so far I'm still very interested in becoming a public librarian and working with young people and their families in rural communities like the one where I grew up. I look forward to sharing and exploring these interests outside of school with my fellow Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholars and future colleagues at my first ILA Conference. Sessions on leading beyond the library, community engagement, and reimagining storytime all sound terrific and I think getting Eric Klinenberg (whose work is a big inspiration of mine) to give the keynote speaks volumes about the caliber of the conference and ILA overall.

After the conference I'm excited to begin my ILA mentorship and take part in as many ILA programs as possible. Like everyone, I'd prefer to participate in-person, but I really appreciate how much can still be done virtually now. While a part of ILA I'd like to get to know as many other members as possible, especially those interested in my aforementioned goals, but also international librarianship and library advocacy. Because I believe building relationships locally, nationally, and internationally will be crucial to the librarianships' future success. Collective, organized action is the only way we stand a chance of effecting any kind of

meaningful change in our field and the world at large, so making meaningful connections with library folks of all stripes will be a major priority for me. Can't wait to get started!

Ashley Mitchell

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

It took me over eight years to make the decision to pursue professional librarianship. My undergraduate degree is in psychology—my original plan was to become a psychologist. I enjoyed my psychology classes, but I also loved working in libraries. I have been working in public libraries for over 19 years now, and I never made a concerted effort to work in the mental health field after I graduated in 2008. I just really enjoyed my library career! Most of my career has been spent in circulation—my last position in circulation was as an evening/weekend supervisor. I served in this position for four years until I was transferred to Technical Services in 2016. This move put me closer to administration, which gave me insight into how libraries are run. I also joined a few groups and committees that increased my interest in library management, which led to me finally deciding to pursue the MLS in 2019. I was discouraged from pursuing librarianship for many years because of the lack of diversity that I saw in the profession, but one day I realized that I could encourage more diversity by becoming a librarian myself.

I really enjoyed all the classes I have taken so far, but my favorite class of them all is Collection Development. I currently work in technical services, and our collection development department is included under the technical services umbrella. I already had an idea of how collection development works due to our proximity, but I am learning more than I ever would have imagined about collection development in this class so far! I just completed an assignment where I had to interview our collection development manager, and I learned a lot about our library's weeding process as well as what being a collection development manager entails. I look forward to learning more about how materials are selected for library collections.

My goal is to eventually go into library management. I already have years of supervisory experience under my belt, but I am aware that managing a library or library system is completely different than managing or supervising a circulation department. Obtaining my MSLIS degree will provide me with invaluable tools that will make my transition into library management as smooth as possible. I would like to start out as a reference librarian at a public library, and hopefully advance into positions of more authority and responsibility as I gain more professional experience. I want to go into library management to evoke changes that will make the library a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone, regardless of their background, culture, or orientation. There is an urgent need for more people of color in library and information science, and I can help meet this need by becoming a librarian myself.

I am very excited about attending the ILA conference. The decision to offer this conference virtually makes it much more accessible for me to attend. I live in New Jersey, and I am not sure if a trip to Illinois for the conference would have been feasible for me financially. I was very impressed with the number of sessions that cover topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. One of those sessions will be presented by my current professor, Jeanne Holba Puacz, who teaches the collection development class that I love so much! I am really looking forward to attending this conference and gaining new knowledge about new (and current) practices in librarianship.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to become a member of ILA as part of the Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholar Program. I am hoping to make connections with fellow library students and other library and information science professionals in Illinois. This is an especially unique opportunity for me because I live in New Jersey and I do not have many connections to library and information science professionals in Illinois outside of the University of Illinois. I believe that it is wise to have many professional connections across the country and having ILA membership increases my connections exponentially. I am proud to say that I now have membership in ALA, ILA, and New Jersey's library association (NJLA).

My strongest hope for the library profession is an increase in diversity. I would also like to see current librarians become more open to diversity. I was actually discouraged from becoming a librarian for years because I was frustrated with the lack of respect and empathy from librarians (and other library staff) towards the customers that we serve, but I am seeing some small changes that have encouraged me to take the leap into librarianship. However, we still have a long way to go towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in library environments, and I'm willing to do whatever I can to help facilitate these changes that make the library a space that is comfortable and safe for library patrons as well as staff.

I also hope that the cost of obtaining a master's degree in library and information science can be reduced over time. There would be many more librarians of color if obtaining the degree was not so cost-prohibitive. There are great programs out there that assist people of color with tuition costs, but the scholarships are very competitive, and there often are not nearly enough scholarship funds available to fund even a fraction of the applicants. I would also like to see more mental health literacy-related partnerships and programs in libraries. Mental health literacy is very important, and libraries can help empower their patrons to take charge of their mental health. Some libraries are already doing this, but I would like to see some programs offered on a larger scale, such as mental health first aid training.

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Chinyere E. Oteh

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

I first decided to apply to library and information science programs when I was 25 because I am a curious person and thought the field of librarianship would be a good fit for me. I ended up not attending grad school at that time. Recently, I left my role as a founder of a community project and decided to apply to the University of Illinois' library and information science program so that I could continue helping people learn and connect to resources while making a career change. While it has been a personally and collectively challenging year, I turned 40 and felt great about it and then received the Spectrum Scholarship which were both highlights! So far, my favorite class has been Intellectual Freedom with Dr. Emily Knox. I came to a new understanding about allowing diverse and sometimes controversial voices and ideas to be shared even if they are in conflict with my own personal beliefs.

My goal is to work as a community archivist and help activate collections and imagine creative ways to invite the public to learn from archives. I enjoyed the ILA conference and particularly the keynote speaker Eric Klinenberg and learning about his latest book. I thought that he gave thoughtful answers to questions and addressed the practice of protesting to protect democracy. I hope through my ILA membership I can connect with seasoned archivists and learn more about archives and hidden histories that have been preserved in Illinois institutions.

My hope for the library profession is that as library workers we will reject the role of neutrality, ensure that there are safe spaces for patrons and ourselves to learn together in the public commons and continue to provide access to the information and technology that improves quality of life.

“I hope that libraries continue to stand up for First Amendment rights while continuing to be mindful of their critical role in social justice movements.”

MIMOSA SHAH

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Information Sciences

I decided to make all *this* [waves hands at library school and the profession in general] official after years of working for various non-profit and grassroots organizations. For the past six years, I've worked at Skokie Public Library. As the library's adult program coordinator, I create learning opportunities with and for community members. I enjoy designing experiences in collaboration with fellow colleagues, and I especially enjoy the flexibility with which we can make lifelong learning and curiosity open and accessible for so many. Through my experiences both on the job and elsewhere, I noticed that my interests, passions, and values align with the core values and functions of librarianship. As a nontraditional student, I continue to think deeply about how to bring what I value—community, creativity, justice, and transformation—into my daily work. I recognize that there will be sources of tension or resistance throughout this process, but I accept that challenge. Granting myself permission to delve deeper into topics that interest and delight me is such a privilege, especially at this stage of my life.

It's only my first semester, but I'm enthralled by the course I'm taking with Dr. Emily Knox, Intellectual Freedom and Censorship, which I specifically referenced in my application materials last fall. This course has shifted my perspective on what libraries with a capital “L” can provide (as spaces for activating democratic ideals) while continuing to be the libraries with a lower-case “l” that we treasure as nodes for learning, connection, and community-building.

I look forward to continuing to facilitate learning and create alongside others, regardless of what type of library I work at. And I look forward to the work itself, which will involve the ability to nurture relationships and understanding both with and for community. I'm presently very interested in methods for dismantling dis/misinformation campaigns, and how to better incorporate them with media literacy training; zine-making, collage, and paper arts, and how they can be used as tools for counter storytelling and memory-making; digital photography, and how it is shared, archived, and collected using different platforms; and space-making, particularly as it pertains to helping under-represented or marginalized communities to be seen and heard in ways that feel authentic for them.

I'm also committed to helping make the field of librarianship more open and welcoming. One of my friends gave a talk once in which he referenced a door: How do we become doors for others to pass through? And how do we make that same freedom of movement—pausing upon the precipice, admiring the door itself, turning the knob, and looking at what lies ahead—elastic and responsive for ourselves as well? This ideal of liberation, in which I am able to help others shine while sustaining all that is human in me: This is what I want to frame and take with me, wherever I go, whatever I do.

I have been to ILA's annual conference in the past, both as a participant and as a presenter. The conference highlights for me the many different ways that library workers are willing to experiment and be playful. I appreciate such opportunities to connect with ideas and people, including at this year's virtual conference. I look forward to learning more through my activities within ILA, as well as sharing my experiences and skills with others throughout the association.

I hope that libraries become more expansive and adaptable to the times and circumstances, especially as we deal with the outbreak of COVID-19 and consider how to safely operate. I hope that libraries will reckon with the fact that our institutions are not and will never be measurable by those of purely corporate entities, nor should they aspire to be more like them. I hope that libraries continue to stand up for First Amendment rights while continuing to be mindful of their critical role in social justice movements. I hope that the profession continues to act as a bridge for people to understand and create new worlds of their own. I also hope that the library profession sincerely examines their strategies for being more inclusive and equitable, and actually makes greater strides towards hiring and retaining a more diverse body of workers. I am very grateful to the Illinois Library Association for being named a 2020 Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholar. I'm honored to be part of this group. 

ALA Spectrum Scholarships

Do you know a terrific potential librarian who is a member of a traditionally underrepresented population in librarianship? Are you a terrific potential librarian who is a member of a traditionally underrepresented population in librarianship? Please spread the word about applying, or consider applying yourself, for an ALA Spectrum Scholarship! The Illinois Library Association's Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholarship program, supported by the ILA Diversity Scholarship Fund, provides free ILA conference attendance, a free one-year ILA membership, a small cash stipend, and mentoring to ALA Spectrum Scholars who live in Illinois or attend an ALA-accredited master's degree program in Illinois.

From the ALA Spectrum Scholarship webpage: "The Spectrum Scholarship Program actively recruits and provides scholarships to American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern and North African, and/or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students to assist them with obtaining a graduate degree and leadership positions within the profession and ALA."

Learn more and apply at www.ala.org/spectrum.

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2020 ILA Awards Showcase



Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award
The Rock River Consortia (Dixon Public Library, Milledgeville Public Library, Rock Falls Public Library District, and Sterling Public Library). Sponsored by the ILA Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Fund.



Crosman Memorial Award
Sara Benson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Sponsored by Dominican University School of Information Studies.



Davis Cup Award
Katie Clausen, Gail Borden |Public Library District. Sponsored by ABDO.



Illinois Academic Librarian of the Year Award
Molly Beestrum, Northwestern University Galter Health Science Library and Learning Center. Sponsored by Library Juice Academy.



Intellectual Freedom Award
Rebecca Ginsburg, Education Justice Project. Sponsored by the ILA Intellectual Freedom Fund.



Librarian of the Year Award
Roberta Koscielski, Peoria Public Library. Sponsored by Today's Business Solutions (TBS), Inc.



Deborah Dowley Preiser Marketing Award
Pamela Salomone, St. Charles Public Library. Sponsored by the Oak Park Public Library.



Readers' Advisory Service Award
Cook Memorial Public Library District. Sponsored by the Adult Reading Round Table.



Reference Services Award
Johnna Schultz, Effingham Public Library. Sponsored by Ancel, Glink.



Alexander J. Skrzypek Award
Glenna Godinsky, Gail Borden Public Library District. Sponsored by the Illinois State Library.



TBS, Inc. Technical Services Award
Natalie Hall, Moraine Valley Community College Library. Sponsored by Today's Business Solutions (TBS), Inc.



Valerie J. Wilford Scholarship Grant for Library Education
Jeffrey Merino, East Maine School District 63. Sponsored by the ILA Valerie J. Wilford Memorial Fund.



Resources and Technical Services Forum (RTSF) Scholarship
Jennifer Finnerty, North Chicago Public Library; Kevin Halpin, M.L.I.S. student at Dominican University; and Brooke Nelson, East Peoria Community High School Library. Sponsored by the ILA Resources and Technical Services Forum.



Trustee of the Year Award
Dr. Ronald Rodgers, Wilmette Public Library. Sponsored by Peregrine, Stime, Newman, Ritzman & Bruckner, Ltd.



Robert P. Doyle ILA Conference Grant for Support Staff
Darnetta Bolton, Orland Park Public Library. Sponsored by the ILA Reaching Forward Forum.



Oberman and Rich Reaching Forward Conference Grant
William Pleas, Highland Park Public Library. Sponsored by the ILA Reaching Forward Forum.



Young Adult Librarian of the Year Award
Laurel Johnson, Skokie Public Library. Sponsored by Sourcebooks.

Awards

2020 Annual Conference

Statistics



Total attendees: 1,911

Exhibit booths: 150

Conference Registration

	2020 Virtual	2019 Tinley Park	2018 Peoria	2017 Tinley Park	2016 Rosemont	2015* Peoria	2014 Springfield	2013 Chicago	2012 Peoria	2011 Rosemont
Full	747	661	542	616	641	837	555	620	538	623
Single day	–	584	267	543	527	451	170	611	197	643
Preconference only	–	0	13	0	0	20	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL		1,245	822	1,159	1,168	1,308	670	1,231	735	1,266
Speakers	–	22	32	50	42	47	49	81	84	80
Exhibits only	–	98	44	46	61	89	101	131	102	169
Exhibitor representatives	164	300	220	290	270	250	267	378	203	430
TOTAL	911	1,665	1,118	1,545	1,541	1,694	1,087	1,821	1,124	1,945

* Joint conference with ISLMA.

Hotel and Booth Statistics

Hotel Rooms Reserved by ILA	–	342	905	402	475	1,325	980	491	810	685
Hotel Rooms Used	–	263	865	398	354	1,190	921	352	729	432
Number of Companies	50	109	92	114	113	116	113	124	111	125
Number of Booths (including any paid canceled booths)	50	121	102	126	128	138	131	141	124	145
Total Booth Square Feet	–	12,100	10,200	12,600	12,800	13,900	13,100	13,300	12,400	14,500

Reaching Forward's first virtual conference!
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www.ReachingForward.net

REACHING FORWARD

Friday, May 7, 2021

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

Econergy LLC, Chicago
Fifth Third Bank, Lemont

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

Glen Carbon Centennial Library, Glen Carbon
Lemont Public Library, Lemont
Lincoln College of Technology, Melrose Park
West Union District Library, West Union

TRUSTEE MEMBERS

Oliver Baer, Rockford Public Library
Zachary Binkley, White Oak Library District
Henrietta Dotson-Williams, Rockford Public Library
Jamie Getchius, Rockford Public Library
Deborah Hill, River Forest Public Library
Janet Jordan, Prospect Heights Public Library District
Shabnam Mahmood, Skokie Public Library
Natalie Milo-Nicolasin, Skokie Public Library
Janet Moore, Rockford Public Library
Kristine O'Sullivan, Mount Prospect Public Library
Cesar Sanchez, Rockford Public Library
Richard Zumwalt, Rockford Public Library

STUDENT MEMBERS

Megdelawit Abebe, Albany, CA
Danielle Belanger, Oakland, CA
Lauren Byrd, Urbana
María Cifuentes, Darien
Tacia Diaz Fonseca, Urbana
Rebecca Flore, Chicago
Jeanni Floyd, Champaign
Kelsey Flynn, Orland Park
Meghan Glaspell, O'Fallon
Amanda Gotte, Waukegan
Dawn Grossenbacher, Bridgeview
Amanda He, Chicago
Clarissa Ihssen, Woodstock
Luisa Leija, Whitier, CA
Allison Levine, Riverwoods

Krystal Madkins, Chicago
Anthony Martinez, Ithaca, NY
Nathan Miller, Chicago
Ashley Mitchell, Collingswood, NJ
Cristalan Ness, Chicago
Chinyere Oteh, St. Louis, MO
Jonathan Puckett, Urbana
Rayyon Robinson, Slidell, LA
Jessica Rodrigues, Steger
Mayra Rosas, Champaign
Lesley Rose, Plainfield
Megan Smith, Buffalo Grove
Calla Sundin, Champaign
Angeline Zalatoris, Antioch

PERSONAL MEMBERS

Rosie Camargo, Evanston Public Library
Alissa Droog, Northern Illinois University Libraries
Katie Fox, Skokie Public Library
Linden Galloway, White Oak Library District
Tammy Hansen, Illinois State Library
Rochelle Hartman, Lincoln Library
Kendall Harvey, Prairie Trails Public Library District
Katherine Henry, Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Jacqueline Hyde-Young, Glen Ellyn Public Library
Lexy Jones, Geneva Public Library
Lauren Kay, Cicero Public Library
Laura Munoz, Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library District
Joshua Newport, Illinois State University
Yesennia Ruiz, Brookfield Public Library
Aliese Sadler, Illinois State Library
Janelle Sander, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Jennifer Schmidt, Indian Trails Public Library District
Janis Shearer, University of Illinois
Beth Smilack, Jerseyville Public Library
Marie Szymanek, Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Donna Techau, Bement Public Library
Steven Veeneman, Genoa
Diana Wence, Highwood Public Library
Rosie Williams-Baig, Nancy L. McConathy Public Library
Jazmin Wilson, Lemont Public Library



SHIFT & GROW

Dear ILA Members and Friends,

Writing the Annual Report is an opportunity to take a retrospective look at the past year in the association, and in Illinois librarianship. This year, it's hard to think back to a time before stay-at-home orders, remote learning, and daily Zoom meetings (and sometimes happy hours!). What hasn't changed is the strength, resilience, and dedication of all of you: both on behalf the people you serve in your communities, schools, universities, businesses, and other institutions, and here in ILA. I could not possibly have foreseen what serving as ILA President was going to be like this year, but I am truly honored and privileged to have done so.

Harkening back to the development of the conference theme for 2019—one of the first responsibilities of a newly elected Vice President/President-Elect along with the Conference Program Committee—“SHIFT! Where Will You Grow?”, I note that we have all had to shift this year. We shifted the way we provide services, from primarily in-person with some measure of electronic resources and phone or virtual reference service and instruction; to 100% virtual services temporarily as the State of Illinois' stay-at-home orders took effect. ILA reeled (and shifted!) along with everyone else as the new laws and rules were announced, seemingly one after another, and did our best to keep everyone up-to-date via our daily COVID-19 Updates, which thankfully have returned to their pre-pandemic status as an occasional section in the weekly ILA Alerts. We created the Bigger Than a Building campaign to help libraries promote the idea that the library remains open, and continues to serve beyond our buildings.

The nation shifted this summer with an unprecedented outcry for social and racial justice and equity following the violent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Such injustices against Black Americans are not new, but these galvanized people, including librarians, in numbers and energy not seen since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. ILA leadership quickly issued a statement focusing on the need to act in our own sphere of influence, librarianship, but real change takes time. We have in our strategic plan the twin goals “A Culture of Diversity and Inclusion in the Profession” and “...in the Association,” and while progress has been made (see “ILA Strategic Plan: Current Progress on the Strategy for a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion in the Association,” *ILA Reporter*, vol. XXXVII, issue 1, March 2020), there is much more to be done.

Ideally, the shifts we had to undertake this year will help us grow—as library staff, library trustees, and as an association. One member this year cited her new role as “armchair amateur epidemiologist!” Libraries truly are bigger than our buildings; and we can be better champions of social and racial equity in the communities we serve, and among our library colleagues. As I write this, I currently serve as the association's Past President, whose primary responsibility is to chair the Nominating Committee. I look forward to helping our association continue to shift and grow by helping recruit the next group of leaders to take ILA into the future.

Here's to 2021 and beyond,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Molly Beestrum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Beestrum, Galter Health Sciences Library, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL
ILA President, 2019–20

STRATEGIC SHIFTS

2019-20 marks the first full governance year with ILA's strategic plan (approved in April 2019), with vision statement "Collaboratively shaping a new future for libraries in Illinois" and mission statement "Leadership, advocacy, partnership, and learning for the benefit of Illinois libraries." Work toward the goals identified in the plan began in earnest with the start of the governance year in July 2019, with significant progress made before the COVID-19 pandemic forced ILA temporarily into a maintenance-of-effort mode. A January 2020 assessment of progress toward strategic priorities included the following:

Strategic Priority: A Culture of Diversity and Inclusion in the Association

New activities toward the goals:

- Implementation of the Statement of Appropriate Conduct for ILA events, including an online, anonymous, confidential reporting system unique among library associations, and training for staff and member leaders on receiving and adjudicating reports. The Statement is available on the ILA website at www.ila.org/events/statement-of-appropriate-conduct.
- The Nominating Committee, for the first time, issued an open call for suggestions (including self-suggestions) for nominee consideration.
- Clarification of policies applying to committees and increased transparency (e.g. ILA's policy on open meetings, available at www.ila.org/about/committee-and-forum-resources/open-meetings-policy).
- Creation of two new Forums: Students and New Professionals, and Small and Rural Libraries.
- For the first time, offering pronoun badge ribbons at the ILA Annual Conference.
- Recognition in the form of "Committee Spotlights" in the ILA Alert e-newsletter and the weekly photo contest.
- Examination of committee charges and composition statements by several committees, resulting in proposed changes to the ILA Executive Board (e.g. iREAD, Best Practices) and approved (e.g. Public Policy and Advocacy).

Ongoing activities toward the goals:

- Continuation and improvement of inclusion of ALA's ethnic affiliates operating in the state/region, including promoting ILA committee and forum volunteer opportunities.
- Ongoing discussion of ways to make strategic investment in restricted funds such as the Diversity Scholarship Fund or Intellectual Freedom Fund [Note: Subsequent to this January 2020 report, the ILA Executive Board did transfer \$10,000 from ILA's net asset balance to the Diversity Scholarship Fund].

Strategic Priority: A Culture of Diversity and Inclusion in the Profession

New activities toward the goal:

- Equity, diversity, and inclusion programming by Mark Puente, Senior Director of Diversity and Leadership Programs at the Association of Research Libraries at the ILA Annual Conference, and slated to present at Elevate, the library leadership development event produced in collaboration with the library systems and the Illinois State Library. [Note: Elevate was subsequently cancelled due to the COVID-19 stay-at-home order.]
- Collaborated with Chicago State University on an IMLS grant proposal "Library Leadership and the Promotion of Resilience as a Community Development Strategy."

Ongoing activities toward the goals:

- Continued focus on topics of this nature for the Illinois Youth Services Institute, ILA Annual Conference, and other continuing education opportunities; both in terms of individual presentations and overall conference themes.
- Continued support of the Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholar program.



STRATEGIC SHIFTS

Strategic Priority: Legislative Advocacy

New activities toward the goals:

- Library-focused presentation at the Illinois Association of Park Districts Annual Conference 2020.
- Increased hours contracted with legislative consultant.
- Coalition work with media literacy organizations on advocating for school librarian to be appointed to state's proposed Media Literacy Task Force.
- Coalition work with Census 2020 with Forefront and other advocacy groups to raise profile of libraries as trusted partners in delivering a complete count.
- Coalition work with Freedom to Learn Campaign regarding censorship in prison libraries.

Ongoing activities toward the goals:

- Ongoing work to identify and promote annual legislative agenda via ILA's Public Policy Committee and the ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office.
- Direct advocacy with members of U.S. Congress and the Illinois General Assembly.
- Annual series of Legislative Meet-ups to bring together elected officials and their staff with librarians, library staff, and library trustees.

Strategic Priority: Community Advocacy

New activities toward the goals:

- Development of preparatory video for Library Legislative Meet-ups
- Potential story-collection workshop
- Identification of member leader to participate with the ILA Executive Director in ALA's Fly-In Day

Ongoing activities toward the goals:

- Traditional work with other library-related organizations to advance legislative agendas (AISLE, ALA, other state chapters, etc.).
- Participation in ALA Fly-In Day and National Library Legislative Day.
- Continued content at ILA Annual Conference such as "Legislator Panel" and in 2019, mini "Advocacy Boot Camp" presented by ALA advocacy staff.

Strategic Priority: Leadership

This priority has one goal: Convene critical conversations with partners in the library ecosystem including the Illinois State Library, the three systems, AISLE, and other related consortia and organizations.

New activities toward the goals:

- Development of proposal for the Secretary of State to increase per capita rate for public and school libraries.
- Worked with the Illinois State Library and systems on publication of *Serving Our Public 4.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries*.
- Codified participation of CPL and IHLS in ILA's Public Policy Committee composition statement.
- Increased state support for Directors' University educational event and Trustee Forum Workshops.
- Opened communications with Reaching Forward South about how ILA can best support it, with sponsorship in 2020 and possibly a partnership in the future.
- Proactively reached out to new CPL Commissioner to discuss future partnering and increased engagement between ILA and CPL.

Ongoing activities toward the goals:

- Work with ISL on legislative issues such as patron privacy.
- Continued annual collaboration on Directors' University and Elevate with systems, ISL and ILA leaders.
- Continued focus on Public Policy Committee toward initiatives that broaden access and oppose initiatives that lessen access.

Strategic Priority: Delivery of Member Value

New activities toward the goals:

- New joint student membership offer with ALA (plus new forum for Students and New Professionals).
- Making Zoom account available to committees and forums for remote meetings, enabling broader participation.
- Facilitating new involvement with events, such as IACRL Open Educational Resources (OER) webinar and Young Adults Services Forum Seminar in Winter 2020.
- New forum for Small & Rural Libraries.
- Maximized use of budget and staff time based on member input to convert *ILA Reporter* to a quarterly publication schedule.
- Offered new member communication and engagement opportunity via the ILA Connector blog and the weekly photo contest.

The above report is from January 2020; once the COVID-19 pandemic was declared ILA shifted to keep up with the rapid-fire pace of legislative developments and gubernatorial executive orders, doing our best to keep our members informed. Sometimes members were better informed than we were, and shared information with us so we could in turn share it with the entire Illinois library community. ILA worked closely with the Illinois State Library, Chicago Public Library, and the three systems to make sure we understood and disseminated the most current information available. Following the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, the ILA President, Past-President, Vice-President/President-Elect, Executive Director, and staff released a statement condemning racism and violence and promising action in ILA, featured on the ILA home page at <https://www.ila.org>.

Advancing our strategic priorities took a back seat to coping with these crises, while much of ILA's activity did in fact align with our priorities, particularly leveraging technology and increasing communication with members to deliver enhanced member value: We heard many times how valuable our ILA Daily COVID-19 Updates were, for example.



ILA'S ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Early in the year, ILA followed our normal process, developing a legislative agenda in the Public Policy Committee in the fall, following other legislation and making a decision to either support or oppose items that would have an impact on libraries, and, with the Advocacy Committee and local coordinators across the state, producing our series of Legislative Meet-ups in February to help get across our message to elected officials. We had a significant success in achieving an increase in the per-capita rate for state dollars allocated to school and public libraries. This rate was established in 1995 at \$1.25 for public libraries and \$0.75 per student for school libraries. Statute allows for these to be under- or over-appropriated; comparing the history to the last time the minimum wage was raised in 2010: From 2010 to 2019 the per capita grants were under-appropriated six times, fully appropriated four times, and never over-appropriated. This year, the approved state budget included an 18% increase to \$1.475 for public libraries and \$0.885 for school libraries, truly remarkable in a year featuring severe budgetary turmoil as a result of the pandemic.

In addition to advocating for increased library funding, it is important for libraries to be at the table when legislative issues that affect us are being discussed. This year, we were invited to present at a meeting of the Local Government Subcommittee of the Illinois General Assembly's Property Tax Relief Task Force, and were able to provide input on a proposed bill allowing for library districts in localities with recreational cannabis dispensaries to collect a 1% tax on cannabis sales. Neither property tax reform, nor the cannabis tax, advanced this year; but ILA will continue to make sure our voice is heard on such issues.



As the state looked toward reopening and Governor Pritzker announced his "Restore Illinois" plan with phases and regions identified to reopen gradually, libraries too planned for post-pandemic operations. Libraries across the state continued to offer services while physical buildings were closed; it became apparent that we needed to emphasize this fact to our publics and our stakeholders. Hence, "Bigger Than a Building" was created. Designed to give librarians tools, evidence, articles, graphics, and talking points that would enable them to make the case to stakeholders, whether in a public district or municipal setting, or an academic one, the campaign was developed with leadership from Marci Merola, the former director of ALA's Office for Library Advocacy.

ILA's Legislative Meet-ups in 2020 saw a slight decrease in attendee participation from 518 to 505 attendees, and a bit larger decrease in legislator participation from 72 to 61 legislators or legislative staff in 2019. For the third year, we hosted eight events around the state, ensuring full state coverage. For the first time, ILA created a preparatory video, featuring ILA Legislative Consultant Derek Blaida and Executive Director Diane Foote presenting the state and federal legislative agenda, and sharing tips for making the most of the Meet-ups. For the second year, the Reaching Across Illinois Library System made available a promotional video, this one titled "Elders of the Internet," to show at the events themselves. This video features Nick Offerman starring in an imagined futuristic conversation with "Social Media," "Search Engine," "Fake News," "Pop-Ups," and "VideoTube" in which it becomes clear the library is truly the best source of information.

On the Federal Level

While the annual National Library Legislative Day, scheduled for early May 2020, was cancelled, the American Library Association hosted its second annual Fly In Days on February 10-11, 2020, with library funding as the top priority. ILA Executive Director Diane Foote and Rockford Public Library Director Lynn Stainbrook visited with staff from the offices of Senators Duckworth and Durbin, and Representatives Quigley, Schakowsky, and Bustos to discuss library funding priorities. Representatives Quigley and Bustos serve on the House Appropriations Committee.

For the fourth year in a row the proposed White House budget, released while we were in DC, sought to completely eliminate IMLS. Congress, however, has recognized the value of libraries and has consistently voted to fund the agency and the funds it administers through LSTA. In fiscal year 2020, IMLS received a modest increase to \$195.4 million from \$183 million in 2019; including \$5.6 million for Illinois via the Grants to States program. We advocated for another modest increase in 2021, to \$206 million, which still does not meet the previous peak level of funding, \$213 million in 2010.

While the funding priorities have changed to relief bills with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated declarations of disaster and stay-at-home orders, we can thank our Illinois senators and representatives for their support of library funding. Senators Duckworth and Durbin both signed both letters in support of fully funding the Library Services and Technology Act and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Act for school libraries, and 10 out of 18 Illinois representatives signed one or both. Please note, Reps. Bustos and Quigley were not among the signers, not because they don't support library funding, but because as members of the Appropriations Committee, the letters were addressed to them.

As the COVID-19 pandemic developed, four federal relief bills were enacted over spring 2020, beginning with Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, signed on March 6; the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which includes the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act and the Emergency Paid and Sick Leave Act, signed on March 18; the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which included \$50 million for libraries via IMLS and established the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), signed on March 27; and a fourth bill that extended PPP funding, signed on April 24. The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency (HEROES) Act, including an additional \$5 million for libraries, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on May 15, but was not taken up in the Senate. A fifth relief bill remains elusive, with the House, Senate, and White House budget staff remaining in negotiations.



CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

More than 1,600 people attended the ILA Annual Conference in Tinley Park on October 22-24, 2019. Three full days of programs, exhibits, and awards provided an opportunity for attendees to focus on the conference's theme: "SHIFT—Where Will You Grow?" Conference Co-Chairs Heather Jagman and Alissa Williams led a Conference Program Committee that assembled a strong array of speakers on a wide variety of topics, including the Opening General Session Robert Stein of the Shedd Aquarium's Guest Experience and Communications Department, the President's Program featuring author, mathematician, and concert pianist Eugenia Cheng, a full day focused on trustee programs, the ILA Advocacy Committee's popular program "Learn Effective Advocacy to Legislators from Legislators," among many others.

Apart from the Annual Conference, most ILA programming takes place in the spring; this year, some events were cancelled and others shifted to a virtual experience. The Library Trustee Forum Workshops (expanded to two in 2019) were slated for March 7 in Springfield and March 14 in Oak Brook; the former took place in person with the latter shifted to a webinar format on April 30. Featured speaker Amanda Standerfer of Fast Forward Libraries presented "Plan—Implement—Communicate: Building Strategic Planning and Storytelling Capacity for Community Impact" at both events, which were supported by a grant from the Illinois State Library (ISL).

Mark Puente, then senior director of diversity and leadership programs as the Association of Research Libraries, was slated to present at the Elevate Illinois Libraries Leadership Program, an annual one-day workshop supported by an ISL grant scheduled for April 18. This event was cancelled, but is expected to return in 2021.



ILA partnered again with the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and the Reaching Across Illinois Library System to once again put on Directors' University, traditionally a one-week intensive training course held in early June for new public library directors. This year, Directors' University took place over a series of Fridays from June through September online, featuring the same educational lineup of sessions covering public library budgeting and finance, human resources, policies and records retention, and more. Similarly, Reaching Forward, scheduled to take place on Friday May 1, was converted to a series of "Reaching Forward Fridays," which featured online presentations of programs that had been accepted for Reaching Forward, including "Experience Required: Building Supervisory Skills When You're Not a Manager," "Advocacy for Introverts, Advocacy for Extroverts: How You Can Make a Difference in Trying Times," "Top Marketing Trends for Libraries," "Programming 101," and more.



Even prior to COVID, ILA had begun to increase our portfolio of educational offerings with "Noon Network," a series of short, relatively informal, and free-of-charge online programs that attendees could enjoy while eating lunch. This model proved to be prescient, as we already had it in place when online programs out of necessity became the norm. Noon Networks included "Multi-Generational Story Time Field Trips," "Connecting with Staff Remotely," "How I Grew My Teen Volunteer Program and You Can, Too," "Music Programming in Libraries," "Connecting with Staff Remotely," and more.



All online programs are archived and available to view on the "Remote Learning" section of the ILA website at <https://www.ila.org/events/remote-learning>.



GROWING THE BOTTOM LINE

ILA enjoys a diverse array of revenue sources, making the association unique among state chapters of ALA. Membership, continuing education, and publications are all traditional sources of revenue; and the LIRA insurance pool, the CallOne affinity program, and especially the iREAD summer reading program enable ILA to survive and thrive as traditional revenue sources face pressure from tight budgets and changing environments. The Fund for Illinois Libraries continues to offer ILA institutional members who do not have their own associated foundations or friends groups a way to accept donations and apply for grants.

iREAD marked its 39th year in 2020 with the theme, “Dig Deeper! Read, Investigate, Discover.” This year was like no other as libraries scrambled to offer virtual and remote summer reading and learning activities. iREAD Committee members Lindsay Herron and Ashley Stewart presented “Digging Deeper Into the 2020 Summer Reading Program” in a webinar for the Illinois Heartland Library Association that was subsequently shared in the iREAD newsletter and the 2020 section of the ireadprogram.org web site, focusing on ideas for converting a summer reading program to a virtual experience. Committee chair Portia Latalladi led an effort that included art by a fantastic array of illustrators including Rafael López, David Roberts, Aleanna Harris, and Jingo de la Rosa. The U.S. Department of Defense continues to purchase iREAD resources and incentives for military libraries worldwide and California, Minnesota, and Alaska adopted the program in summer 2020.

This year ILA acted quickly to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loan, which was approved. We, like so many others, were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 and its associated stay-at-home orders to our budget and therefore our program portfolio, and this loan, which we expect to be fully forgiven, helped us through that period of uncertainty. Although we did have to cancel two events because the tight timeline made it too difficult to pivot to an online experience, for the most part ILA operations continued throughout the pandemic: processing Fund for Illinois Libraries donations to member libraries, keeping up communications, converting as many continuing education opportunities to virtual experiences, and so on. We did not lay off or furlough any staff, although staff continues to work primarily remotely. Our members reciprocated with a strong show of support: We closed fiscal year 2019–20 at 97% of our budget for membership, which is a truly remarkable figure. We are so very appreciative of our members, who stuck with us throughout this time of uncertainty.

Contributions to the association also continue to increase, most notably through the Illinois Library Luminaries program, which supports the ILA Endowment and saw one new inductee in 2018-19, Mary McTague Huchting. Such income also helps build ILA’s array of restricted funds, which primarily support awards and scholarships, including the Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Fund, the Diversity Scholarship Fund, the Intellectual Freedom Fund, the Legal Defense Fund, the Valerie J. Wilford Memorial Fund, and the Robert R. McClarren Fund. This year, the ILA Executive Board itself voted to transfer \$10,000 from ILA’s net asset balance into the Diversity Scholarship Fund, to enable it to support initiatives broader than its traditional role in the Sylvia Murphy Williams Scholar program.



Fiscal Report (Year Ended June 30, 2020)

Revenue

General Operations	\$ 143,969
Membership	\$ 287,039
Conference	\$ 442,070
iRead	\$ 2,277,526
Publications	\$ 96,357
Public Policy	\$ 2,000
Awards	\$ 5,480
Endowment Contributions	\$ 5,286
Workshops	\$ 26,580
Reaching Forward	\$ 7,295
Donor Restricted Funds Contributions	\$ 2,185
Total Revenue	\$ 3,295,787

Expenses (reflecting allocation of staff salaries, taxes, and benefits to functional areas)

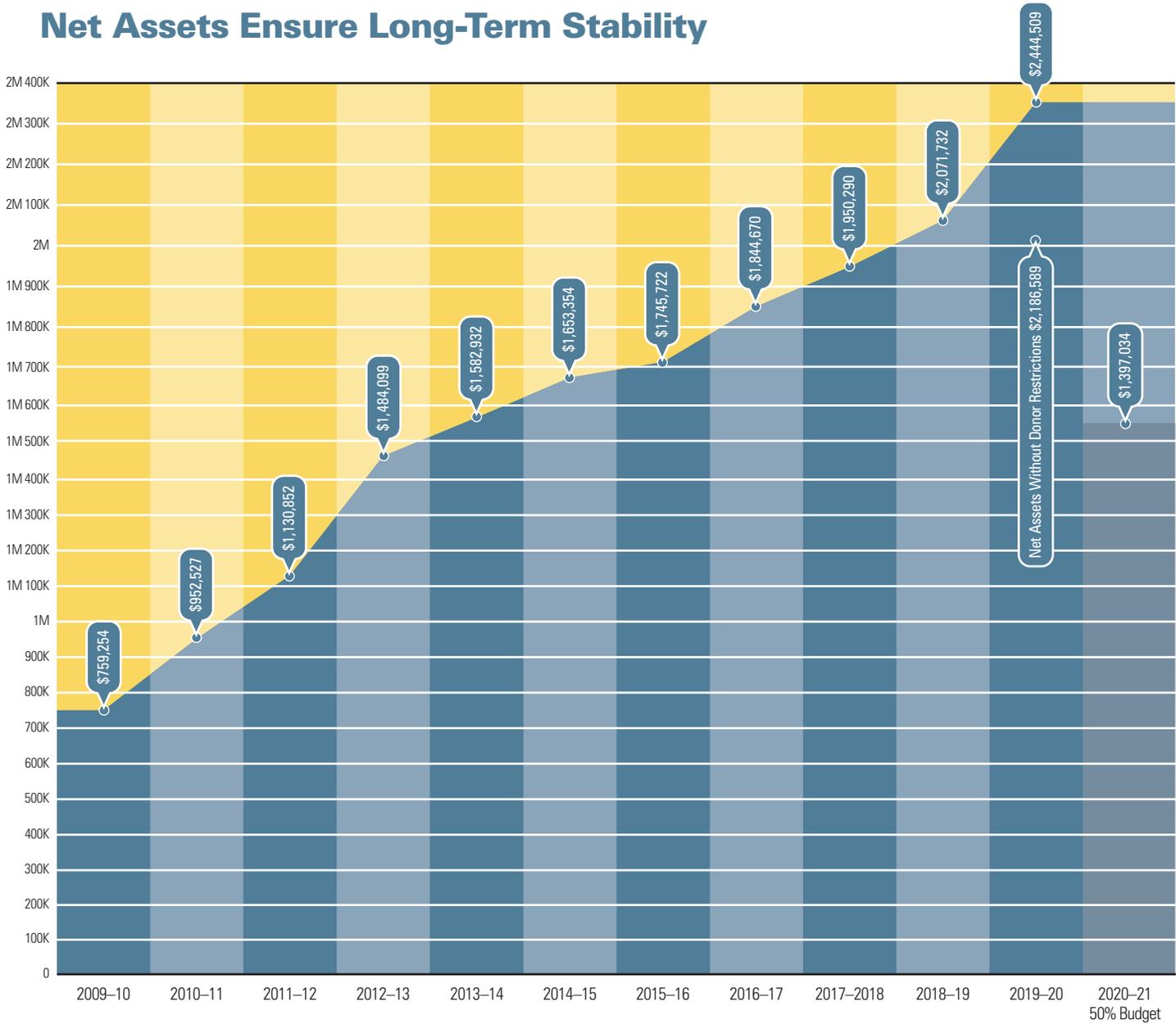
General Operations	\$ 298,293
Membership	\$ 153,726
Conference	\$ 370,894
iRead	\$ 1,793,982
Publications	\$ 68,936
Public Policy	\$ 117,308
Awards	\$ 20,916
Workshops/Projects	\$ 80,113
Forums & Committees	\$ 5,407
Reaching Forward	\$ 31,990
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 2,941,565

Operating Net	\$ 354,222
Other Revenue: Gain on Long-term Investments	\$ 25,060
Other Expenses: Amortization, Depreciation	\$ 6,506
Increase in Net Assets	\$ 372,777
Net Assets at end of FY 2019	\$ 2,071,732
Net Assets at end of FY 2020	\$ 2,444,509

Net Assets Comprise:

Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 2,186,589
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$ 257,920
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atkinson Memorial Award: \$2,004 • Robert R. McClarren Award Fund for Legislative Development: \$8,891 • Legal Defense Fund: \$915 • OCLC Users Group: \$25,266 • Valerie Wilford Fund: \$17,966 • Diversity Scholarship: \$3,830 • Diversity Scholarship (Board Designated): \$10,000 • Intellectual Freedom Fund: \$2,005 • Endowment Fund: \$191,585 • Unappropriated Endowment Fund Earnings: \$5,458 	
Total Net Assets at end of FY 2020	\$ 2,444,509

Net Assets Ensure Long-Term Stability



Cumulative Surplus

The growth in ILA’s net assets, particularly net assets without donor restrictions, has been a conscious strategy over the past 20-plus years, with the goal of producing an annual budget surplus that will build up a reserve fund of net assets without donor restrictions equal to at least 50% of the subsequent year’s budgeted expenses, according to ILA fiscal policy. This goal has been achieved since 2013; this year, of the net assets listed in the chart above, \$2,186,589 are without donor restrictions. The expense budget for 2020-21 totals \$2,794,069; 50% is \$1,397,035.

2019-2020	\$	372,777
2018-2019	\$	121,442
2017-2018	\$	105,620
2016-2017	\$	98,948
2015-2016	\$	92,368
2014-2015	\$	70,422
2013-2014	\$	98,833
2012-2013	\$	353,247
2011-2012	\$	178,331
2010-2011	\$	193,267
2009-2010	\$	372,938
1896-2009	\$	386,316
Grand Total	\$	2,444,509



2019–2022 ILA Strategic Plan

Vision

Collaboratively shaping a new future for libraries in Illinois

Mission

Leadership, advocacy, partnership, and learning 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 Values of the Profession

Information access, equity, intellectual freedom, and objective truth

Strategies, Goals, and Desired Outcomes

Strategy: Advocacy

Goal: Legislative Advocacy

- Invest in advocacy. Educate and mobilize activist groups and other professional associations to understand and support the cause and critical nature of libraries.
- *Desired outcomes:* Activated strategic alliances and informed advocacy at all levels achieve adequate funding for libraries. Governmental decision-makers increase support for libraries.

Goal: Community Advocacy

- Develop education and tools for library leaders and staff to establish clear understanding of libraries' worth among the people served, resulting in community and stakeholder ambassadorship and engagement.
- *Desired outcomes:* The communities and people served value the presence and vitality of libraries. The communities and people served are vocal advocates for libraries.

Strategy: A Culture of Diversity and Inclusion

Goal: In the Profession

- Develop education for library leaders and staff about increasing diversity in collections and programs and creating an inclusive environment in libraries and librarianship.
- *Desired outcome:* Library leadership and staff are cultivated and engaged in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the communities they serve.

Goal: In the Association

- Review and revamp the committee and volunteer system for functionality, diversity, inclusivity, and recognition. Increase awareness, understanding, and commitment to creating an inclusive environment in ILA.
- *Desired outcomes:* Members recognize their ownership in and have equitable access to participate and be heard in ILA's volunteer structure. Members connect collaboratively for sharing and creation of knowledge.

Strategy: Delivery of Member Value

- Goal: Assess and refresh programs and services, integrating new approaches and technologies to deliver member value in programming, communication, and involvement.
- *Desired outcome:* Members in every segment find relevant value from ILA programs and services.

Strategy: Leadership

- Goal: Convene critical conversations with partners in the library ecosystem including the Illinois State Library, the three systems, AISLE, and other related consortia and organizations.
- *Desired outcomes:* Access to library service continually expands to increasing numbers of Illinois residents. Librarians, library staff, and trustees are supported effectively and efficiently by the library ecosystem in the state.

2019–2020 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President

Molly Beestrum, Northwestern University Galter Health Sciences Library, Chicago

Vice President/President-Elect

Veronica De Fazio, Plainfield Public Library

Immediate Past President

Cynthia Fuerst, Vernon Area Public Library District, Lincolnshire, IL

Treasurer

Brian Shepard, Indian Trails Public Library District, Wheeling, IL

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Miguel Ruiz, Evanston Public Library
Anne Slaughter, Reaching Across Illinois Library System
Diana Brawley Sussman, Carbondale Public Library

ALA Councilor

Jeannie Dilger, Palatine Public Library District

Ex Officio

Diane Foote, Illinois Library Association, Chicago
Greg McCormick, Illinois State Library, Springfield

2019–2020 ILA Staff

Diane Foote, Executive Director
Kendall Harvey, Administrative Coordinator
Tamara Jenkins, Communication and Engagement Manager
Tina Koleva, Membership and Product Services Manager
Cynthia M. Robinson, Deputy Director





Diane Foote

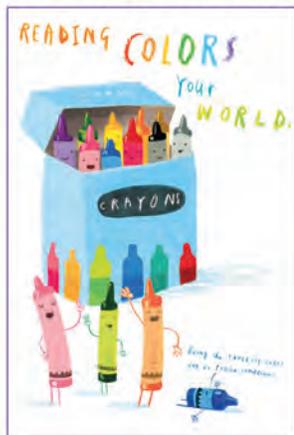
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email: ila@ila.org
www.ila.org

iREAD® SUMMER READING 2021

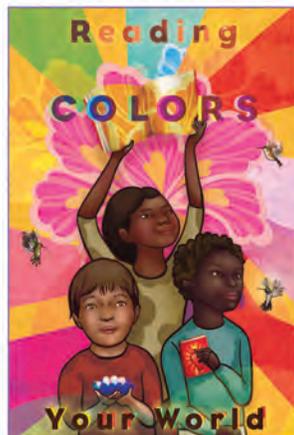
reading colors your world!



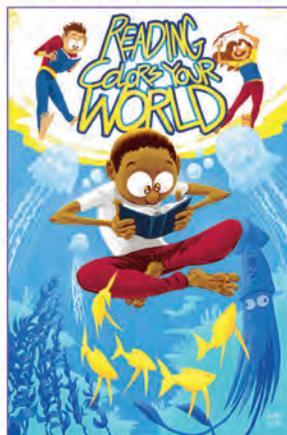
OLIVER JEFFERS



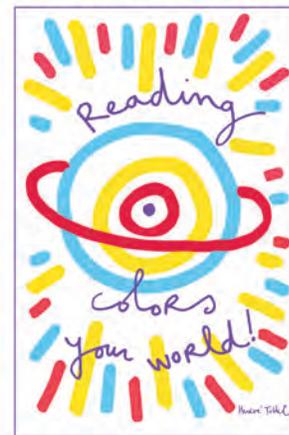
YUYI MORALES



ZACH LEHNER



HERVÉ TULLET



The 2021 theme is *Reading Colors Your World*, which lends itself to a wide range of interpretations and vibrant graphic presentation. The broad motif of “colors” provides a context for exploring humanity, nature, culture, and science, as well as developing programming that demonstrates how libraries and

reading can expand your world through kindness, growth, and community. Library patrons, young and old, will be encouraged to develop creativity, try new things, explore art, and find beauty in diversity. Illustrations and posters will tell the story: “Read a book and color your world!”

Visit the iREAD website to shop in the online store,
view the 2021 summer reading PSA, and learn how to get involved:

ireadprogram.org



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Skokie Public Library
Skokie, Illinois

Skokie Public Library was one of our first clients almost 20 years ago when LFI began. As we celebrate this milestone, it's a special honor to work with library director, Richard Kong, and Skokie staff on their current renovation project. Phase one was just completed and includes a stunning Studio for maker activities, high-tech study rooms, and welcoming community spaces. Single-faced shelving units are inset into the walls that surround the study and community rooms creating a unique, built-in visual and giving way for larger walkways. Stay tuned for the reveal of future phases of their renovation. Youth and teens spaces to come!



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