

REPORTER

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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

Illinois State Representative Ryan Spain strolls with his daughter through the Peoria Public Library's StoryWalk®. Please see "A Story for All Ages: The Rise of the StoryWalk®" on p.12 and related sidebar "A Stroll through Illinois' StoryWalks®" on p.16 for more about this innovative library program that brings the library into the outdoors to combine reading and physical activity. Illinois librarians may also remember Rep. Spain as one of the two legislator presenters at the 2019 ILA Annual Conference in Peoria, speaking at the ILA Advocacy Committee's program "Learn Effective Advocacy to Legislators from Legislators."

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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Simple Play: Kindergarten Readiness in Illinois

Every librarian I know in Illinois is concerned about kindergarten readiness in our children. In 2017, results for a new state measure established by the Illinois State Board of Education called KIDS, or Kindergarten Individual Development Survey, were staggering. According to KIDS, about 3 in 4 children entering kindergarten in 2017 were not ready for the classroom. In KIDS assessments, teachers measure 14 developmental benchmarks within the first 40 days of attendance by observing students in language, literacy, math, social and emotional development, as well as in skill-building competencies, such as curiosity, creativity and perseverance.

When KIDS results were released, I felt discouraged. Results in Elgin school district U-46 painted a bleak picture. Only 48% of kindergartners who previously attended U-46 preschool met the kindergarten readiness benchmark for reading—being able to identify 40 upper/lowercase letters, and 54% of students were reading at or above grade level. On a state level, there is also a significant racial disparity: 32% of Asian kindergartners and 29% of Caucasian students demonstrated readiness, compared to only 19% of African American students and 13% of Hispanic students. Elgin's population is 45.1% Hispanic, which means our need for reform is high, and we must work to close that gap for these children.

The data is distressing—almost shocking. Our instinct may be to do more—“kick it into high gear” and “double down on some serious early literacy.” However, this approach may not be constructive in correcting the deficits. Do kindergartners in Illinois begin school unprepared? Yes. We need to be doing a better job. But how? Full-day preschool, community initiatives, and teacher trainings are opportunities. But perhaps we need to make the approach simpler, rather than more sophisticated. Early literacy experts often say, “Parents are a child's first and best teacher.” But many parents and caregivers aren't sure what that phrase means or how to be their child's best teacher. In fact, words like “early literacy,” “language development,” “early math,” and “socio-emotional skills” can convolute things more, and even feel intimidating.

Additionally, parents are stressed—often chronically. Many are working more than one job, living paycheck to paycheck, and facing barriers to access basic necessities. This creates further shame about parenting. Things like “early literacy” don't mean much when there's no food on the table. Research from the University of Rochester found that “ongoing strains, like poverty or depression, disrupt the body's natural stress response, making mothers more likely to engage in a host of problematic parenting behaviors, including neglect, hostility, and insensitivity.” If parents don't have positive parenting tools, self-resilience, and encouragement from other adults, how can we expect them to prepare their kids for kindergarten?

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Finding a solution to the kindergarten readiness problem in Illinois seems daunting; however, here are some suggestions for how to make progress. First, we can look to *Every Child Ready to Read*[®], a parent and caregiver education initiative developed jointly by the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), both divisions of the American Library Association (ALA). The first edition was published in 2004, and it was a staple for children’s librarians. However, the second edition, released in 2011, was significantly updated. After an in-depth evaluation of the first edition, the initiative went from containing fancy vocabulary such as “phonological awareness” and “background knowledge” to recommending five simple practices: Singing, Writing, Playing, Reading, and Talking. This change represented a major shift that greatly simplified the concepts for the targeted end audience: parents and caregivers.

Children’s librarians should expect to be taken seriously, and part of that is using the technically correct terminology such as “environmental print” and “predictive language” when speaking to the library board or at a professional conference. However, what would happen if we, as librarians, mirrored ECRR’s second edition and dialed down our language in our public service? Practical suggestions and positive encouragement may resonate more with parents and caregivers, rather than an evaluation of their child’s skills in categories they may not understand. Kindergarten readiness assessment is important, and it’s valuable that KIDS is observation-based, rather than exam-based. However, the message parents and caregivers need to absorb is much simpler: PLAY.

Imaginative play is intricate and complex. Best of all, it’s natural. It doesn’t need to be assessed or quantified. As Mr. Rogers said, echoing psychologist Jean Piaget, educator Maria Montessori, and others, “Play is really the work of childhood.” Early childhood education researcher Vivian Paley concurs: “Play is the serious and necessary occupation of children; it’s not just a pleasant hobby or a frivolous means of spending nonworking hours.” She continues, “Adults impose phonics, math, reading, writing, and other tasks into a primary position in the young child’s life and set play aside as relatively unimportant.”

Play alone may not solve Illinois’s kindergarten readiness problems. However, I am suggesting that those who work with families use straightforward, conversational language and encourage play. I’m suggesting that administrators and library board members allow mess and open play in their spaces, because mess is simply a byproduct of engaged play and learning. I’m suggesting that storytimes, while having structure, incorporate fewer “lessons” and more silliness, spontaneous learning, and play. I make these suggestions because these very things will do what we’re striving for—build neural networks in the brain, develop self-regulation and social skills, and yes—improve kindergarten readiness.

So what can libraries do to lessen this huge gap? Many of the initiatives at Gail Borden are things commonly done in libraries already—developmentally-appropriate storytimes, 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, and parent/caregiver education. Here are a few more ideas about how to bring simple language and play that encourages kindergarten readiness into the library:

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Countdown to Kindergarten: This program is a 6-week series that focuses on stories, songs, and activities specifically about kindergarten. This is an “own your own” event, where parents are encouraged to leave the room while their child experiences what “real kindergarten” might be like. Half of our time is play!

Week of Play: This program, developed by Coordinator of Grade School Services Tabatha Anderson, is a celebration of play through passive programming. Gail Borden offers hands-on, exploratory play that is accessible all day during the week between Christmas and New Years. For kids under kindergarten age, we’ve offered searching for magnetic letters in shredded newspaper in a water table, seek and find posters, balance beams, crawling tunnels, stackable snowmen, and more.

Messy Programs: Mess does not have to equal stress! Paint, bubbles, food coloring, shaving cream—these aren’t just fun. They provide tactile and sensory experiences that encourage learning by allowing children to discover, be curious, and be creative. Kids need these skills in kindergarten.

Art: Gail Borden’s Early Literacy Associate Paula Bosshart designed an interactive drop-in program called *Preschool Picassos*, in which preschoolers travel around a room to a variety of stations to engage in process art. Process art is distinct from crafting in that there is no example or “expected” end product. Kids used race cars, Legos, and even their fingers.

Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar: Organizations from the entire Elgin community sponsor a free yearly calendar for caregivers of preschoolers. Every month has a theme, a list of books recommended by Gail Borden staff, and ideas for play on each day of the year.

Open Play & Books in the Community: School District U46, the Elgin Partnership for Early Learning, Blue Kangaroo, and a St. Charles girl scout have partnered to develop “Language in the Laundromat,” which features off-site book and play locations designed to promote learning opportunities for children and families. How can YOU bring books and play out into non-traditional locations in your community?

Gateway-Certified Teacher Trainings: When our teachers are well-educated, our kids are well-educated. Offering quality professional development trainings for early childhood educators is essential for kindergarten readiness. Many Illinois preschool teachers need to have both DCFS credit hours and something called Gateway-certified hours. Taking the time to become a Gateways trainer will make the children’s librarian an influencer of early childhood education.

Outdoor Play: Never forget nature. Even if you don’t have an outdoor space, you can bring the outside in during all seasons. Snow science, leaf printing, water play—all engage body and brain.

“Play is the serious and necessary occupation of children; it’s not just a pleasant hobby or a frivolous means of spending nonworking hours.”



WELCOME BABY

This program, initiated by Gail Borden's Director of Branch Services Ana Devine, is an invitation for newborn babies to get a library card. What better way to encourage caregivers than to get them in the library on day one? We invite baby and caregiver or family member for a mini-storytime and a tour of the department, plus a free bag of goodies donated by community partners. It's a great time to model best practices with baby—without the fancy language.



parent or caregiver's perspective: Is it scarier to "Sing the ABCs with your child" or to "help your child develop phonological awareness?" I vote for ABCs all the way.

We can't do it alone, and we can't make it complicated. One person, one department, one library or organization, cannot change this problem. We can work together, day by day, and offer our best so kids can be ready for school. When I first began library school, I remember thinking, "What the what is phonological awareness?" I was intimidated by the jargon. Consider it from the

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Every Child Ready to Read®

This collaborative initiative between the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Public Library Association (PLA), both divisions of the American Library Association (ALA), offers a gamut of resources for librarians to use in engaging parents and caregivers in early literacy. Many of the resources are at no cost, including sample elevator speeches for library staff to use in speaking with stakeholders, video clips in English and Spanish, press talking points, and more. Other resources, such as toolkits, bookmarks, and brochures, are available for purchase. Please visit <http://everychildreadytoread.org>.

Readiness Roundup

SouthWest Advocates for Youth Services (SWAYS), a special interest group of the Illinois Heartland Library System, contributed this roundup of kindergarten readiness activities taking place in southern Illinois compiled by Erica Hanke-Young and Kate Kite of the Six Mile Regional Library System.

Cahokia Public Library shares their donated books with the HeadStart Early Childhood Center to help prepare the students for kindergarten. No budget is needed since the books are donations to the library. This program serves all children enrolled in the HeadStart program. A representative from the early childhood center comes to the library to pick out books. Picking out the best books for the students from a wide variety of donations is the biggest challenge. The biggest success is when the students graduate from the HeadStart center reading on a 3rd grade level. In the next school year, the library will go into the centers and set up story times with the different classrooms. Stay in contact with your local HeadStart Centers for tips on what they need. —Valerie White

Forsyth Public Library has an ongoing 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program. The budget for the program is approximately \$25 per year. 239 kids have participated since the program started. Outreach is done through posts and pictures on social media of other children completing the program. The biggest challenge has been getting those who signed up to finish the program; more than 50 children did not complete the program before kindergarten. The biggest success is that 51 children have completed, and 188 are still working towards reading 1000 books. The library plans to continue the program in the future. The 1000 Books Before Kindergarten and the Demco websites offer great resources. Prizes are awarded for reading books in increments of 100: Each time a child reads 100 books, they bring in their log and get a sticker and their picture taken before we give them the next log; at 500 they get a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten tote bag; and when they complete the program they get their name in a book of their choice at the library. —Marissa White

“The biggest challenge is keeping those little active minds and bodies engaged.”



Mississippi Valley Library District (MVLD) in Collinsville conducts several kindergarten readiness programs, all united in that they don't require a large budgetary outlay; successful outreach is conducted via in-house fliers, Facebook, and word-of-mouth; and the library plans to continue all of them. MVLD's 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program follows the typical format: Log 100 books at a time, when children reach 1000 we put the child's name on our LED sign, take their picture to go on our Facebook page, give them a bag with a book, and a local bakery, Kruta's, provides a free dozen donuts. We purchased bags, but the books are donated and Kruta's Bakery sponsors the donuts. We have had about 250 children signed up since we started about two years ago, and at least 150 have completed. It can seem inconvenient to update charts, take pictures of "completers," and that sort of thing, but it's not onerous at all. All the kids (and parents) who complete the program are big successes. We make a big deal when they turn in that final reading log. It's a great way to promote reading without major expense or time. Starting good reading habits with the very young helps so much with language development. As a former teacher I have seen too many kids with vocabulary gaps and how it hinders their learning. This program can be an incentive to some parents who wouldn't normally read to their kids.

MVLD also offers Preschool Storytime each Tuesday morning. We generally have anywhere from 5–18 or so. The biggest challenge is conflicts for families with work schedules and preschool. The biggest success is seeing the kids who return week after week and get excited about the stories. I'm always looking for ways to improve language development and to make the literature meaningful to them. It's very easy to do, so much fun, and not costly at all.

MVLD also offers Baby Boogie, during which we read three very short, interactive stories sandwiched between fingerplays, songs, and a variety of movement. We usually have 10–15 children in attendance. The biggest challenge is keeping those little active minds and bodies engaged. The biggest success is when those little tiny ones who can barely talk know how to say your name and get excited about coming each week. I'm always looking for new songs and ways to engage them. It's a great way to begin teaching young children how to be in a group situation. We are informal, but try to set a certain standard of behavior. It's fun to see everyone enjoying all the kids and working to keep them engaged. Although when I began I was apprehensive about doing this, it's become my favorite program of the week. I love the kids who participate, and enjoy seeing how some of the adults form friendships with others in the group. —Ginny York

Louis Latzer Memorial Public Library in Highland has three storytimes during the week, hosts a Paws for Reading program, offers TumbleBooks (online, interactive versions of existing picture books) to their patrons, runs a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program, and offers volunteer tutoring. The budget is based solely on donations. Outreach is done through Facebook, calendars with events, and flyers given out at community events. The biggest challenge is accommodating a range of abilities and behaviors of the participants. The biggest success is having approximately 30 people participate each week. —Josie Elliot

Six Mile Regional Library District (SMRLD) in Granite City offers an ongoing 1000 Books Before Kindergarten Program. Parents are encouraged to read with their children; for every 100 books read, the child gets a special sticker and their name placed on a display in the library. At the halfway point, 500 books, the child receives a book and when they finish the program they receive a backpack. The budget is minimal, just for display materials and prizes. Currently 59 children are registered for the program. SMRLD has a quarterly brochure that goes out to our schools, HeadStart, housing authority, and other businesses and organizations. We do outreach at various community events such as the Melting Pot Market and TWIGS barbeque. We also market through fliers and social media. 1000 Books Before Kindergarten is a new initiative, started in December 2018. Our biggest success is that we should have our first finisher soon. One participant has reached 800 books. We plan to keep this program going well into the future. My pro tip would be just do it. This is an easy program to start and maintain.

SMRLD also does monthly storytimes for both our local HeadStarts. HeadStart classes either walk to the library or a youth services staff member visits the HeadStart locations. We read stories and sing songs with each class and we bring coloring sheets for the students. This doesn't require a budget, just staff time. We saw approximately 250 HeadStart students last school year. The biggest challenge is finding the staff time to travel and do the storytimes at the HeadStart locations. The biggest success is when the children are excited about the library and make their parents bring them there. We plan to keep doing this as long as HeadStart lets us. It takes some scheduling but it is worth it. —Erica Hanke-Young

■

A Story for All Ages: The Rise of the StoryWalk®

“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body,” goes the quote by the late poet, playwright, and politician, Joseph Addison.

The StoryWalk® Project marries the two perfectly, bringing libraries and families into nature in a simple, yet magical, way that is being adopted worldwide. Today, more than a decade after it was the brainchild of a Vermont public health employee and her librarian friend, StoryWalk® is implemented in all 50 states and more than a dozen countries, including Bermuda, Canada, England, Germany, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia and South Korea.

The Peoria Public Library and Peoria Park District are among the latest to create a sweet respite from the hustle and bustle with Peoria’s first StoryWalk®. “I just thought this would be a great thing for the families to do together, keep them moving and reading,” said McClure Branch reference assistant Gwen Ayler, who spearheaded the project, along with Lakeview Branch reference assistant Katy Bauml. “Most of the families who come to the park visit the library at the exact same time, the same day, so I just thought it would be a great package deal.” Added Bauml, “We thought this would be a fun activity to bring to the Peoria area to help promote literacy while also allowing families to exercise.”

Nestled under shade trees along a winding paved path, Peoria’s StoryWalk® is located in Columbia Park, a pocket park surrounded by neighborhoods in the city’s core and just steps from the historic 1930s-era McClure Branch of Peoria Public Library. *Bunny’s Book Club* by Annie Silvestro was the first book chosen.

A StoryWalk® can be temporary or permanent. Regardless, the concept is the same: to encourage families to spend time reading and walking through nature, together. Typically, a book is broken down into individual pages, which are then laminated to protect them from the elements and mounted on displays. Each mounted display has one page, encouraging visitors to stroll along the walk to read the entire book. The length of the walk depends on the space available, but a half-mile total distance seems to work well for all ages.

Since its dedication June 5, the walk has been extremely popular, said Barbara Van Auken, a Peoria Public Library board member who lives just blocks away. “They love it,” Van Auken said of her neighbors. “It’s functioning just as we envisioned. You see parents or older siblings walking along with little ones, holding their hands and sometimes holding them up to read.”

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State Rep. Ryan Spain, R-Peoria, leads his daughter down Peoria’s first StoryWalk® path at the recent dedication on June 5.



Van Auken, as head of the Peoria Public Library's Community Relations Committee, led the fundraising efforts to secure the \$8,500 needed for the StoryWalk® infrastructure and books. The project was then funneled through the library's Friends, a nonprofit that supports various library programs and needs. "The neatest thing about this is how it was such a true collaboration," Van Auken said. "From the Peoria Park District, which provided the labor and the land, to the library staff who had the idea, to the library board members who raised the funds." Indeed, once Ayler and Bauml had worked through the details—everything from the ideal location to the best and copyright-friendly way to display the books—Van Auken said the board raised the funds in less than a month. Each post, which was purchased from Barking Dogs Exhibits, a Wisconsin-based company that specializes in StoryWalk® materials, cost \$425 to sponsor. The library board had more sponsors than needed and is currently exploring future StoryWalk® locations at either another Peoria Public Library branch or a Peoria school.

With direction from the original StoryWalk® founders, Ayler and Bauml knew that three copies of each book featured would need to be purchased. Two of the books are used on the StoryWalk® and one is set aside for pages that may need repair. If certain books don't have enough pages to use all the posts, library staff plans to use the additional space to promote library programs.

Meanwhile, the StoryWalk® at Peoria's McClure Branch plans to host "Strolling Storytime and Picnic" every other Wednesday during June and July, which coincides with the library's Summer Reading program. The StoryWalk® book will be changed out before each picnic. The library will provide water and juice boxes and families are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch. After storytime, the library is also providing toys, including jump ropes, chalk, bubbles, and more.

Peoria Public Library Executive Director Randall Yelverton dedicates Peoria's first StoryWalk® on June 5, the eve of the library's Summer Reading program.



THE START OF THE STORY

In 2007, Anne Ferguson was working as a chronic-disease prevention specialist in Montpelier, VT, tasked with trying to get families to be more active. She had a simple idea: Take the pages from a children's picture book, attach each one to a stake and line them up along a path for folks to read and enjoy. She ran the idea past her friend, Rachel Senechal, the program and development coordinator for the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier, VT, and StoryWalk® was born. Senechal says in the years since its start, they have been "shocked" at how popular this simple concept has been. "Pakistan has StoryWalk®. That surprised me. It is a simple idea, but it's been a joy seeing how it has been received. We've also been really pleased at how installations have been done differently." Senechal's library currently has 40 StoryWalk® books that they will loan to other libraries throughout Vermont, and they also purposefully choose some picture-only books. "We found that we had

a number of new immigrants in Vermont and that sometimes the parents weren't able to read so we choose a couple books that don't have words, which I love. It means they can still connect without that barrier." Senechal added that they have also had translations done—one by high school Spanish students and another into French by seniors at a local senior center. They tape the translations onto the pages without disturbing the book and violating copyright.

"We used to put up a pad of paper at the end of the StoryWalk® for comments, and one of my favorites was from a man who said, 'I'm a 50-year-old man, and I know this is supposed to be for kids, but I think it's fantastic,'" relates Senechal. "That's a comment that stays with us. It reaches all ages. It doesn't matter if you're 3 or 83. As adults, we oftentimes forget about children's books. They're magical in many ways." **ILA**

Peoria Public Library board member Barbara Van Auken poses next to Peoria's first StoryWalk®, located next door to the McClure Branch, Peoria Public Library, in Columbia Park.



A Stroll through Illinois' StoryWalks®

Photo credit: Meghan Harmon



Chatham Area Public Library

Each year in September, the Chatham Friends of the Parks hosts a Kite Festival at the park down the street from the Chatham Area Public Library. The library has had a presence at the festival for many years, but this year decided to include a StoryWalk® path. Borrowed from Forsyth Public Library, the StoryWalk® path told the story of *The Pirates Next Door* by Jonny Duddle. The story began outside our tent, meandered, and concluded inside where participants could then work on a craft, chat with a librarian, and choose a special treat or two to take home. According to staff, the inclusion of the StoryWalk® was a wonderful addition to the event in that it encouraged adults and children to move, discuss, experience, and connect to a story together at their own pace. Plus, the event is always scheduled close to International Talk Like a Pirate Day, so that tie-in was really fun. Some of the staff, rumor has it, may have dressed up as pirates. Yaarr!

—Laura Mitkos

Photo credit: Marissa White



Forsyth Public Library

Forsyth Public Library used StoryWalk® as part of their 2018 summer reading program. The theme was “Reading Takes You Everywhere” and StoryWalk® activities were planned for the first and last weekends of summer reading as a way to encourage patrons to “travel” through a book and around our library grounds. The beautiful green space around the library was used to create a path that started at the front door of the library, meandered between trees, and eventually returned to the front door of the library.

For the first StoryWalk® weekend, Forsyth used the children’s picture book *From Kalamazoo to Timbuktu!* by Harriet Ziefert because it fit their summer theme so perfectly. The characters in the story imagine a journey using a variety of types of transportation. Participants followed the StoryWalk® path with a game card to mark off the transportation styles, then presented it for a prize.

Summer reading wrapped up in August, also known as Arr-gust, International Pirate Month, so they featured *The Pirates Next Door* by Jonny Duddle. For this event, participants walked the path, then came back to the library to decorate a pirate treasure chest.

The story pages were mounted onto portable boards, allowing the path to be changed. Additional stories could also be showcased. Forsyth staff says they will continue to incorporate StoryWalk® activities into future library programs. —Rachel Miller

Photo credit: Jacqueline Risk



Peru Public Library

The Peru Public Library worked in collaboration with a local Boy Scout, Christian Risk, who was seeking Eagle Scout distinction with Peru Scout Troop 123. He wanted to do his Eagle Scout Service Project to help Peru Public in some way because he grew up going there and wanted to give back. The library had wanted to do a StoryWalk® in the past, but did not have funding, so library staff suggested StoryWalk® for his project. He accepted and took the lead—from building the posts from scratch to working with the city of Peru to make sure the posts met ADA requirements to raising

all the money for the project. The library is responsible for changing out the books once a month, but they let Christian choose the first 12 books. Christian recorded his entire process and gave it to the library's local history department so others can follow his path.

—Lynn Sheedy

For more information on how to start your own StoryWalk®, visit <https://www.kellogghubbard.org/storywalk>



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Censorship in Prison Libraries: Danville and Beyond

In May 2019, the Illinois library community received an alarming bit of news: Between November 2018 and late January 2019, more than 200 books were removed, censored, or banned from the Education Justice Project library at the Danville Correctional Center, located in East Central Illinois.¹ Among these books were titles such as *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington; *Don't Shoot: One Man, A Street Fellowship, and The End of Violence in Inner-City America* by David M. Kennedy, and “*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*” And *Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.

This particular library, located inside two rooms within the prison's education wing, was established and staffed by the Education Justice Project (EJP), a college-in-prison program that offers University of Illinois classes and other resources to incarcerated men at the medium/maximum-security Danville Correctional Center. EJP has been offering courses at the prison since 2009, through which incarcerated students can obtain college credit or certificates in education and the humanities. EJP also offers English as a Second Language and anti-violence programs, and hosts guest speaker events and poetry readings.

EJP students are University of Illinois students, and so also have access to Interlibrary Loan materials from U of I libraries. Students complete loan requests for specific titles or topics of study, and the requested items are provided by the EJP librarian—if the items pass the correctional facility's clearance process.

The decision to remove these books from the library's collection was not mandated by EJP or the program librarian, but by prison officials. The Illinois Department of Corrections

published this official statement on the removal: “Per (department) policy, all publications must be reviewed for admittance into Department facilities. When it was discovered that books had entered Danville Correctional Center without being appropriately reviewed, they were removed from the facility.”² However, EJP representatives contest this explanation. According to EJP Community Librarian Holly Clingan, “We've been operating for a long time with rules on the submittal of resources which unfortunately periodically and arbitrarily change for no reason.” What the program hasn't received from the correctional facility, Clingan says, is a clear and fair policy to help eliminate this kind of censorship.

The themes addressed by the books that were removed from the library include critical pedagogy and learning, race, African American history, slave narratives, human struggle and suffering, the Holocaust, and gay culture and gender identity.

The restriction of library materials that may provoke critical thinking on certain topics or offer critiques of the criminal justice system is not an experience unique to Danville Correctional Center. Earlier this year, the Arizona Department of Corrections banned *Chokehold: Policing Black Men* by Paul Butler from all Arizona correctional centers. This ban was enacted on the basis that the contents of Butler's book—an award-winning exploration of prevailing racism in America's criminal justice system—are “detrimental to the safe, secure, and orderly operation” of Arizona prisons.³

In Texas, inmates can read Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as well as two books by former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke.⁴ *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, however, is prohibited.

[continued on page 20]



Prison libraries and their staff also face other roadblocks, such as lack of funding. In 2017, the Illinois Department of Corrections spent a total of only \$267 on books for educational programming across 28 correctional facilities.⁵ This is a shockingly substantial decrease from the approximately \$750,000 spent on books annually in the early 2000's. In 2015, the state of Illinois appropriated to the Department of Corrections a budget of \$17 million for "Educational Programming." \$180,000 of the budgeted amount—or 1%—was actually used.⁶

According to a 2015 report published by the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (SPAC), cutting costs in the short-term won't necessarily lead to positive long-term effects.⁷ SPAC found that 48% of Illinois inmates released from prison each year will return to prison within three years, and the cost of just one recidivism event is nearly \$119,000. Funding programs with potential to reduce recidivism rates would be a major step towards lightening the financial burden of the Illinois Department of Corrections over time.

A separate study, conducted by the RAND Corporation in 2013, indicates that educational correctional programs such as EJP have the potential to do just that.⁸ According to the study, "inmates who participate in correctional education programs have 43 percent lower odds of returning to prison than those who do not." For every \$1 invested in the program, the prison will save on incarceration costs by \$4 to \$5 during the first three years following an inmate's release. The study also notes that employment after release was 13% higher among former inmates who participated in either academic or vocational programs than those who did not.

Given these statistics, supporting libraries and educational programs within prisons appears to be a choice that carries obvious benefits all around. If that's the case, though, then why do correctional departments seem to be cracking down on inmates' access to reading material?

According to Holly Clingan, "there is a lot of tension about how people view this work." Clingan contends that the work of EJP and similar programs is disruptive to the standard corrections model, in that "knowledge can free oppressed minds." Several of the books removed from the EJP library deal with topics pertaining specifically to Black history and the role of race in the American criminal justice system. In Illinois, 58% of incarcerated people are Black, even though Black individuals account for less than 15% of the state's overall population.

In March 2019, as a direct result of the removal of books from the EJP library at Danville Correctional Center, EJP Director Rebecca Ginsburg launched an initiative called the Freedom to Learn Campaign. The Freedom to Learn Campaign advocates for access to quality higher education programming for inmates throughout Illinois, citing the value of "opening minds and creating opportunities."

Investing federal, state, and local funds into these types of opportunities in prisons is the most efficient way to achieve measurable results. In 2015, the Obama administration announced the Second Chance Pell Program⁹, which allowed 12,000 student inmates nationwide to take college-level courses while incarcerated. In 2017, New York governor Andrew Cuomo awarded more than \$7 million to colleges to offer classes in prisons.¹⁰ In Illinois, librarians and other supporters can advocate for lawmakers to ensure that prisoners have greater access to books and educational materials, and that more state and local funds are allocated to the purchase of such items.

On July 8, 2019, three Illinois House of Representatives committees held a subject matter hearing to discuss this act of censorship: the Public Safety Appropriations committee, Higher Education committee, and Higher Education Appropriations committee. Aside from Rebecca Ginsberg and Holly Clingan, representatives from the Uptown People's Law Center, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the John Howard Association of Illinois were also in attendance and presented cases for developing stronger policies to work against unnecessary censorship.

Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections Rob Jeffreys was also present to speak on the topic. According to Director Jeffreys, all but 14 of the 202 titles that were removed from Danville Correctional Center had been returned to the library as of Friday, July 5. However, Director Jeffreys offered acknowledgment that a policy overhaul regarding IDOC review, censorship, and appeal processes is long overdue, and he gave verbal assurance that he would utilize his recently appointed position as Director to implement change.

While ultimately the reduction in recidivism rates as a result of correctional education programs makes a compelling case to limit banning books in prison libraries, it's important to remember that inmates are people with rights, regardless of whether or not they re-offend. The American Library Association's "Prisoners' Right to Read" statement puts it this way:

"Participation in a democratic society requires unfettered access to current social, political, legal, economic, cultural, scientific, and religious information. Information and ideas available outside the prison are essential to people who are incarcerated for a successful transition to freedom. Learning to thrive in a free society requires access to a wide range of knowledge. Suppression of ideas does not prepare people of any age who are incarcerated for life in a free society. Even those individuals who are incarcerated for life require access to information, to literature, and to a window on the world."

Holly Clingan is in agreement. "We treat students like people, not prisoners," she says. "Providing a library serves the human condition—it's not just about being able to assimilate back into society or educating 'the inmate,' it is about being treated like a human being."

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Learn More

- The Freedom to Learn Campaign advocates for inmates' freedom to pursue higher education while in prison, freedom from transfer, freedom from censorship, and freedom to continue education upon release. Individuals and organizations can learn more and sign on in support of the Campaign on its website: <https://freedom-to-learn.net>.
- The American Library Association's "Prisoners' Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" offers a strong statement based on intellectual freedom principles and a compelling public interest in ensuring such rights for incarcerated people. Read the statement on the ALA website: www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/prisonersrightoread

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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

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.

PERSONAL MEMBERS

Stephanie Brandwein, Aurora Public Library
Lisa Coleman, Vernon Area Public Library District
Eilleen Mallary, Culture Shock Chicago, Chicago
Valerie Neylon, City Colleges of Chicago
Leslie Patterson, Chicago Public Library
Katie Stanton, Woodridge Public Library
Joella Travis, Rantoul Public Library

STUDENT MEMBERS

Julia Bae, Buffalo Grove

TRUSTEE MEMBERS

Vicki Baba, Indian Trails Public Library District, Wheeling
Iris Bass, Lincolnwood Public Library District
Brett Bieder, Nippersink Public Library District, Richmond
Virginia Bloom-Scheirer, Oak Park Public Library
John Bloomfield, Hinsdale Public Library
Annie Brooks, Lincoln Library, Springfield
Anthony Brylewski, Prairie Trails Public Library District, Burbank
Colleen Burns, Oak Park Public Library
Gayle Carr, Alpha Park Public Library District, Bartonville
John Chu, Indian Trails Public Library District, Wheeling
Jean Ciura, Cary Area Public Library
Jonathan Currin, Matteson Area Public Library District
Sheri Doniger, Lincolnwood Public Library District
Tom Duffy, Lisle Library District
Judith Easton, Addison Public Library
Anne Hurst, Ela Area Public Library District, Lake Zurich
Karen Larson, Lisle Library District
Jenny Norton, Lisle Library District
Rachel O'Neill, Maryville Community Library District
Erin Ripley-Gataric, Normal Public Library
Jim Rogal, Normal Public Library
Mary Silber, Lincolnwood Public Library District
Crystal Steker, Ela Area Public Library District, Lake Zurich
Georgia Talaganis, Lincolnwood Public Library District
Jessica Yakstis, Maryville Community Library District
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Legislative Update

Now that the 2019 spring session of the 101st Illinois General Assembly has wrapped and we are halfway through the first session of the 116th United States Congress, it's time to summarize current legislation of interest to Illinois librarians. The Public Policy Committee, Advocacy Committee, and Executive Board have worked hard over the past several months, along with legislative consultant Derek Blaida and executive director Diane Foote to identify ILA's legislative priorities and implement action toward these priorities through individual meetings and direct contact with legislators, our series of Legislative Meet-ups, participation in ALA's Fly-In Day, and more. For a complete list of bill numbers that we are following, please visit www.ila.org/.

ILLINOIS LEGISLATION

- Refining language and making consistent for district and municipal libraries the current qualifications for serving as a library trustee: Public Act 100-1476/HB 2222, signed into law in September 2018, updated trustee eligibility to those who had lived in the district for at least one year, those who are not “in arrears in the payment of a tax or other indebtedness due to the library district,” and those who have not been convicted of a crime. ILA seeks first to change “payment of a tax or other indebtedness due to the library district” to “payment of a property tax” primarily over concerns about breaching patron privacy. Second, we seek to have this law also apply to elected trustees under the Local Library Act so that municipal libraries and district libraries are treated consistently. SB 1149 has been introduced for this purpose. As of the close of the spring session, the bill passed the Senate unanimously and an amendment was added in the House to exclude the Chicago Public Library. The bill will likely be heard during the fall 2019 veto session.
- Continue to work with our partner organization, the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) toward our shared goal: to have a licensed school librarian in all schools in the state. ILA and AISLE recognize this is a long-term goal with interim steps, strategic alliances, and other approaches to be developed. ILA will continue to work with AISLE to outline a strategy. Currently, there are several pieces of legislation in the Illinois General Assembly:
 - HJR 9 Media Literacy Task Force: ILA and AISLE support this legislation, and had advocated for the addition of a licensed school librarian as one of the appointees. No such explicit addition was made, although school librarians are certainly eligible to serve. As of the close of the spring session, it is on the Calendar Order of Resolutions and we expect it to be adopted in the fall. At that time ILA and AISLE will submit a nomination to the appointing official.
 - HR 10 No EDTPA: This legislation, which proposes eliminating the EDTPA test as a requirement for professional educator licensure in Illinois, was adopted and is a non-binding recommendation to the Illinois State Board of Education.
 - HB 256 No Videotaping: This legislation, which proposes no longer requiring a videotape of a student teacher in the classroom as a requirement for professional educator licensure in Illinois, passed the House but did not pass the Senate. It was re-referred to the Senate Assignments Committee.
 - HB 1559 Media Literacy: This legislation, which proposes a school may include media literacy in its curriculum, passed the House but was not considered by the Senate committee deadline and was re-referred to the Senate Assignments Committee.



- An additional bill that ILA supported passed, regarding immigration status. HB 1637 keeps the responsibility for federal immigration status enforcement under its appropriate jurisdiction, not schools, libraries, or institutions of higher education, among other facilities, to ensure that these facilities remain safe and accessible to all Illinois residents.
- ILA opposed a number of bills that did not advance that would have negatively affected libraries, including legislation that would have capped property taxes, prevented the use of public funds for attending continuing education opportunities, the ability to dissolve units of local government, set limits on how much in reserve funding a library may maintain, prohibit units of government from opposing unit consolidation and elimination bills, and impose ever-more onerous reporting requirements, among others.
- ILA supported legislation to protect net neutrality that would require any service providers doing business with the state to disclose any activity that abridges that principal, such as “throttling,” or creating “fast lanes” for internet content. As of the close of the spring session, this bill will not advance, primarily due to the fact that there is pending litigation on the Federal level regarding net neutrality protections. Illinois is one of 22 states plus the District of Columbia whose attorney general has joined in a suit against the FCC to restore the protections.
- ILA opposed legislation to allow a referendum for the city of Aurora to make its library board elected rather than appointed. ILA supports the rights of Aurora city residents to determine how their library board should be composed; there is already a provision in state law for voters to convert a city library (which has an appointed board) to a district library (which has an elected board). As of the close of the spring session, after the City of Aurora declined to vigorously oppose, the bill had passed both chambers and will be sent to the Governor’s office for signature.
- ILA opposed legislation that would require a front-door referendum for annexing currently-unserved areas into a library district, on the grounds that library service is a public good and the burden should be on those who seek to limit it, rather than on those who seek to expand it. As of the close of the spring session, the bill passed both chambers and will be sent to the Governor’s office for signature. However, a provision to enable disconnecting annexed territory, which had appeared in previous versions of the bill, was eliminated by amendment.

[continued on page 26]

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Library Funding

- Administered through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is the only federal program that exclusively covers services and funding for libraries, providing more than \$183 million, including \$4.2 million in Illinois in 2019. The U.S. House Appropriations Committee recently approved FY2020 funding bills, which contain a \$25 million increase for IMLS, including a \$17 million increase for LSTA (with potentially \$6 million for Illinois), for a total of \$267 million; and a \$2 million increase for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Act authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for a total of \$29 million. The budget will proceed to the Senate, and then to the White House for signature.
- Each year, early in the budget cycle, we ask Illinois Senators and Representatives to sign “Dear Appropriator” letters urging full funding for LSTA and IAL. Libraries and library funding generally enjoy bicameral, bipartisan support, evidenced by how many Illinois signatures we’ve had on such letters in recent fiscal years, and in the approval of the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018. Both Illinois Senators signed both letters for fiscal year 2020; eight of eighteen Representatives signed the LSTA letter and six the IAL letter. We also thank Rep. Mike Quigley and Rep. Cheri Bustos, both of whom serve on the House Appropriations Committee, for their support. See which Senators and Representatives signed which letters at www.ala.org/advocacy/fund-libraries.

Broadband & Net Neutrality

- ILA supports the Access Broadband Act, which recently passed in the House with bipartisan co-sponsorship. This act would establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, aiming to streamline processes for schools, small businesses, and local communities to access federal broadband resources through a simplified application process and better oversight of federal broadband support programs.
- ILA supported the Save the Internet Act focused on net neutrality protections, which passed in the House but is unlikely to be called in the Senate.
- The Digital Equity Act, cosponsored by Sen. Dick Durbin, is a newer act recently introduced in the Senate; it would establish a “State Digital Capacity Grant Program,” the purpose of which is to promote the achievement of digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, and build capacity for efforts by states relating to the adoption of broadband by residents.

Census 2020

- Libraries are trusted community partners, and will be essential in turning out a complete count for the 2020 Census. Please visit ILA’s collection of census-related resources and information at www.ila.org/advocacy/census-2020-resources.
- On June 27 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Commerce’s rationale for adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census was insufficient, and so for now, the question will come off the Census forms. The Supreme Court did not rule that there could never be a citizenship question on the Census; however, given the tight timing at this point it is unlikely the question could be added for 2020. This is important to Illinois, and Illinois libraries, because our state is already in danger of losing at least one Congressional seat due to population loss; we need absolutely every head counted to avoid losing two, and the proportional amount of federal funding based on census counts. The addition of a question about citizenship status had the potential to suppress the count among immigrant communities, of which there are many in Illinois.
- In addition, the 2020 Census IDEA (Improving Data and Enhanced Accuracy) Act has been introduced in the House with 84 co-sponsors. This Act would preclude the addition of questions to the Census without research, study, and three years of testing.

Federal Depository Library Program

- The FDLP Modernization Act, HR 5305, was sponsored by Gregg Harper (R-MS) in the 115th Congress and had bipartisan support among eight cosponsors. This act would update the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) to improve public access to government information. The act would provide greater flexibility, facilitate collaboration, streamline program requirements, and allow more libraries to participate in the FDLP, making the program’s services more widely available to the public. ILA supports such legislation in the 116th Congress.



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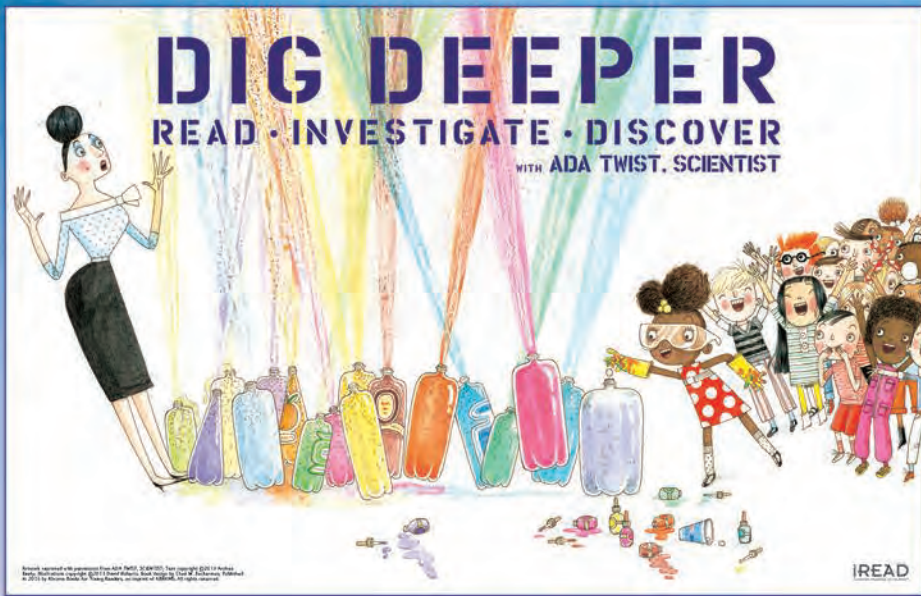
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Illinois Library Association

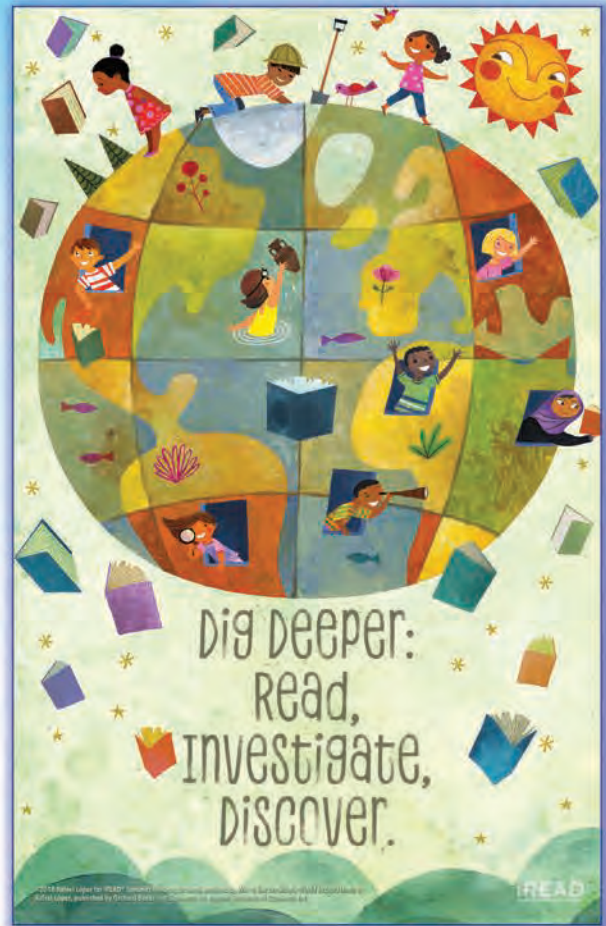
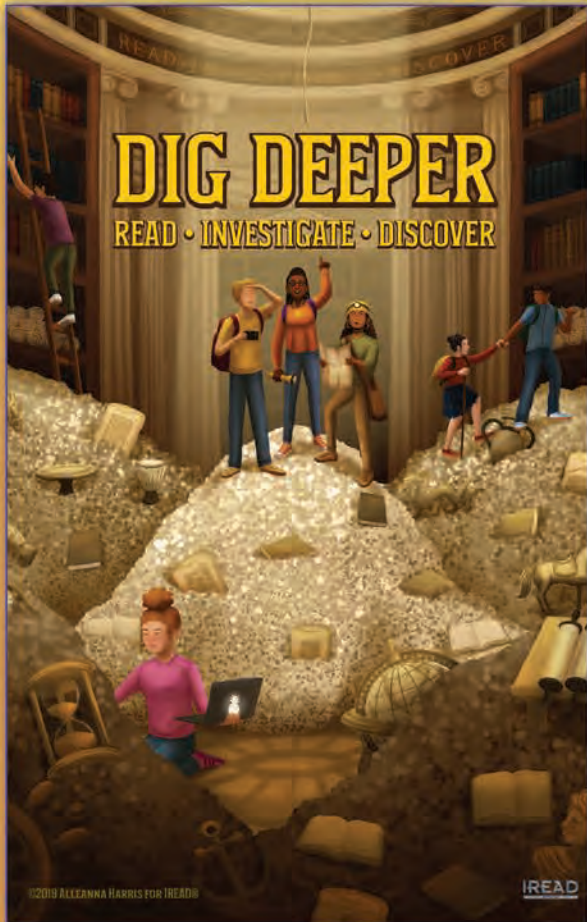
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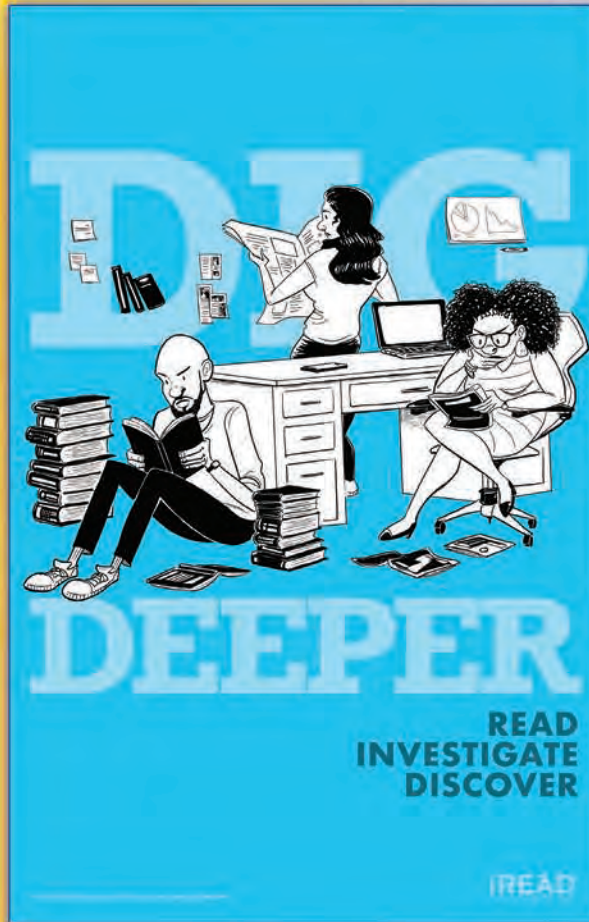
Above
Preschool: David Roberts, illustrator of the picture books in Andrea Beaty's popular and acclaimed *The Questioners* series; iREAD will feature art from the title *Ada Twist: Scientist* (Abrams, 2016). Here, the interpretation of the theme focuses on scientific curiosity.

iREAD Summer 2020

Below
Young Adult: Aleanna Harris is an up-and-coming illustrator whose clients include Comcast, *Highlights Magazine*, and Teach for America and whose first picture book, *The Journey of York: The Unsung Hero of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* by Hasan Davis (Capstone, 2019) received praise from *Kirkus Reviews* and *Booklist*. Her art focuses the iREAD theme on archaeology, geography, and museums.



Above
School-Age: Rafael López, Pura Belpré Award-winning illustrator; iREAD will feature art adapted from his picture book *We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands* (Scholastic/Orchard, 2018) based on the popular traditional American spiritual. López's art encourages the exploration, discovery, and appreciation of everything the world has to offer.



Left
Adult: Jingo de la Rosa is commercial artist and community art educator whose clients include the NBA, the Houston Symphony, the St. Paul Public Library, and Butler University. De la Rosa's graphic, active, whimsical style interprets the journalistic investigative angle and the research process aspect of the 2020 theme.



Summer Reading Programs BY LIBRARIANS FOR LIBRARIANS

WHY Should I Use iREAD?

iREAD is run by the Illinois Library Association, a nonprofit entity; revenues are used to support libraries. There are NO membership fees, contracts, or commitments necessary. iREAD is flexible; you can use the art in perpetuity after purchase. We provide themed templates for any commonly used registration software package such as Beanstack, Evanced, and others. We have a proven track record of success since 1981!

WHO is iREAD?

Librarians are the creators *and* users of the program; readers of all ages infant through adult participate each year; and renowned illustrators create artwork for our materials.

WHAT is iREAD?

A flexible, nonprofit reading program designed by librarians featuring appealing incentives, compelling and adaptable themes, and a comprehensive resource guide chock full of ideas and reproducibles.

WHEN is iREAD?

The 2020 program, with the theme *Dig Deeper: Read, Investigate, Discover* will be available in October 2019. Advanced orders of the 2020 Resource Guide will start shipping as early as November. Although originally designed as a summer reading program, iREAD can be used any time to develop excitement about books, reading, and libraries.

WHERE is iREAD?

Developed by the Illinois Library Association, the program is adopted in other states including Minnesota, California, and Virginia and worldwide by the Department of Defense for libraries on military bases. iREAD is implemented in thousands of individual libraries across the country. Bring iREAD to YOUR library!

HOW Can I Participate in iREAD?

Visit www.ireadprogram.org to view our themed materials, browse or search for incentives, access the online store, connect with us on social media, and learn more about this program. Or, contact us at iread@ila.org or (877) 565-1896.



Sneak Preview! 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!"

Left, 2021 Poster by Hervé Tullet



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Dolton Public Library staff recently unveiled a completely transformed library for their community. Studio GC Architecture + Interiors, along with library staff, made vibrant choices with color that work beautifully throughout the library. Meeting rooms, collaborative and quiet spaces, display and play were all redesigned to meet community needs. LFI shelving, furniture and custom desks helped bring the design to life. See what LFI can do for your library!





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