



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

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Jennifer Drinka Selected as 2024 Illinois Library Association Librarian of the Year

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) proudly announces Jennifer Drinka, Executive Director of the Antioch Public Library District (APLD), as the recipient of the Librarian of the Year award for 2024. This prestigious award celebrates Drinka's exceptional leadership, transformative vision, and lifelong dedication to enhancing library services in Illinois.

Jennifer Drinka's library journey began at the Antioch Public Library District. Drinka grew up in Antioch and was a frequent visitor to the library as a child, eventually securing her first library position as a page. She has always felt a deep-rooted connection to the community and its library. Over the years, she has ascended through various roles across six different libraries, mastering each position with a commitment to excellence and innovation.

As the Executive Director of APLD, Ms. Drinka has spearheaded numerous initiatives that have propelled the library to new heights of achievement. Her leadership was pivotal in securing a \$9.6 million referendum for library renovation and expansion, as well as securing a \$90,000 Live and Learn Grant to ensure the library's restrooms are fully accessible to all patrons. She has also been instrumental in enhancing community

engagement by coordinating legislative breakfasts and transforming the library into a polling place, demonstrating her proactive approach to serving the public.

Under her guidance, APLD has embraced new technologies and modernized services, including the transition to RFID, the implementation of a fine-free policy, and the introduction of a new makerspace and recording studio. Her vision for creating welcoming community spaces is evident in the library's renovated facilities, which include comfortable reading areas and state-of-the-art meeting rooms. While continuing to move her community and the library profession forward, Drinka always places value on tradition and history. She keeps the past close at heart in remembrance of the Antioch Library Directors who came before her and by researching to promote APLD's 100th anniversary.

In addition to her professional achievements, Drinka is deeply committed to professional development and service to the library profession. She actively participates in conferences, workshops, and leadership forums at national and state levels, contributing her expertise to organizations such as ILA, PLA, ALA, and others. She extends that commitment towards making personal connections with her community members by hosting Fireside Fridays, a program that encourages APLD patrons to discuss topics of local interest while enjoying the comfortable ambiance of the newly renovated library.

The Librarian of the Year Award celebrates individuals who exemplify outstanding leadership, innovation, and dedication to advancing library services. Jennifer Drinka's achievements underscore her profound impact on APLD and her unwavering commitment to the library profession.

The Illinois Library Association Librarian of the Year Award will be presented at an awards ceremony during the 2024 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The conference will take place October 8-10, 2024, in Peoria, Illinois.

For more information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

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About the Illinois Library Association

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization that represents Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. Founded in 1896, it is the third-largest state library association and serves as a chapter within the American Library Association. ILA is comprised of 2,000 personal and more than 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries, as well as librarians, library staff, trustees, students, and library vendors.