

REACHING FORWARD / SOUTH

ILA Illinois Library Association

Friday, April 4, 2025

Thelma Keller Convention Center, Effingham

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2025 Reaching Forward South Committee

Beth Smilack, Chair

Marketing & Communications Specialist
Jerseyville Public Library

Terry Pierson, Chair Elect

Marketing Coordinator
Mississippi Valley District Library

Betsy Mahoney, Past Chair

Branch Manager
Six Mile Regional Library District

Heather Gaines

Director
Maryville Community Library District

Erica Hanke-Young

Youth Services Manager
Six Mile Regional Library District

Bobbi Perryman

Director
Vespasian Warner Public Library District

Joel Pikora

Director
Mascoutah Public Library

Alanna Sablotny

Head of Adult Services
Chatham Area Public Library District

Crystal Snyder

Assistant Director & Community
Engagement Librarian
Columbia Public Library

Cassandra Thompson

SHARE Director
Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Chris Houchens, ILA Executive Board Liaison

Director
Charleston Carnegie Public Library

Schedule

8:00 – 8:45 A.M.	Morning Coffee, Exhibits, and Networking
8:45 – 9:00 A.M.	Welcome
9:00 – 10:00 A.M.	Breakout Session 1
10:15 – 11:15 A.M.	Breakout Session 2
11:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.	Breakout Session 3
12:30 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30 P.M.	Breakout Session 4
2:45 – 3:45 P.M.	Breakout Session 5

Conference Information



Librarians of the Round Table

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Calling all Librarians to join us on a Quest for Knowledge at this year's Reaching Forward South Conference, "Librarians of the Round Table."

Join us on an adventure from Camelot (Effingham) as we explore breakout sessions with King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, and Merlin on a variety of relevant topics designed to aid your quest to make your library more appealing and give you the tools you need to slay your particular dragons! We hope you will mount your trusty steed and join us on this Quest. Knowledge and Adventure awaits!

The Reaching Forward South Committee members invite you to join them in their witty jest: room names have been enchanted to reflect the characters of Camelot.

At 8:45, join Beth Smilack, Reaching Forward South Committee Chair, for a brief welcome with additional conference information in the Camelot Ballroom before the first Breakout Sessions start.

Badges

Conference badges must be worn at all times to gain admission to programs and exhibits.

Coffee

Morning coffee, sponsored by Illinois State Treasurer's Office, will be available from 8:00 to 10:30 A.M.

Exhibit Hours

8:15 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Handouts

Handouts are available on the PhedLoop conference website if speakers have made them available. You can browse through the sessions or search for specific sessions in the search field. If handouts are available, they will be linked underneath the session's description.

Hashtag

#RFSouth2025

Lanyards

Before you leave, be sure to stop by the ILA Help Desk to recycle your lanyard. We'll reuse them for future conferences and prevent them from ending up in a landfill.

Lost and Found

Articles may be turned in and reclaimed at the ILA Help Desk.

Lunch

Lunch, sponsored by the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), will be served from 12:30 to 1:30 P.M. in the Camelot Ballroom.

Mothers' Room

A mothers' room, located near the Help Desk, will be available throughout the conference.

Quiet Room

Need to take a break? The Galahad Room will give you a place to relax and refresh. Please respect others in the room and take conversations out of the room.

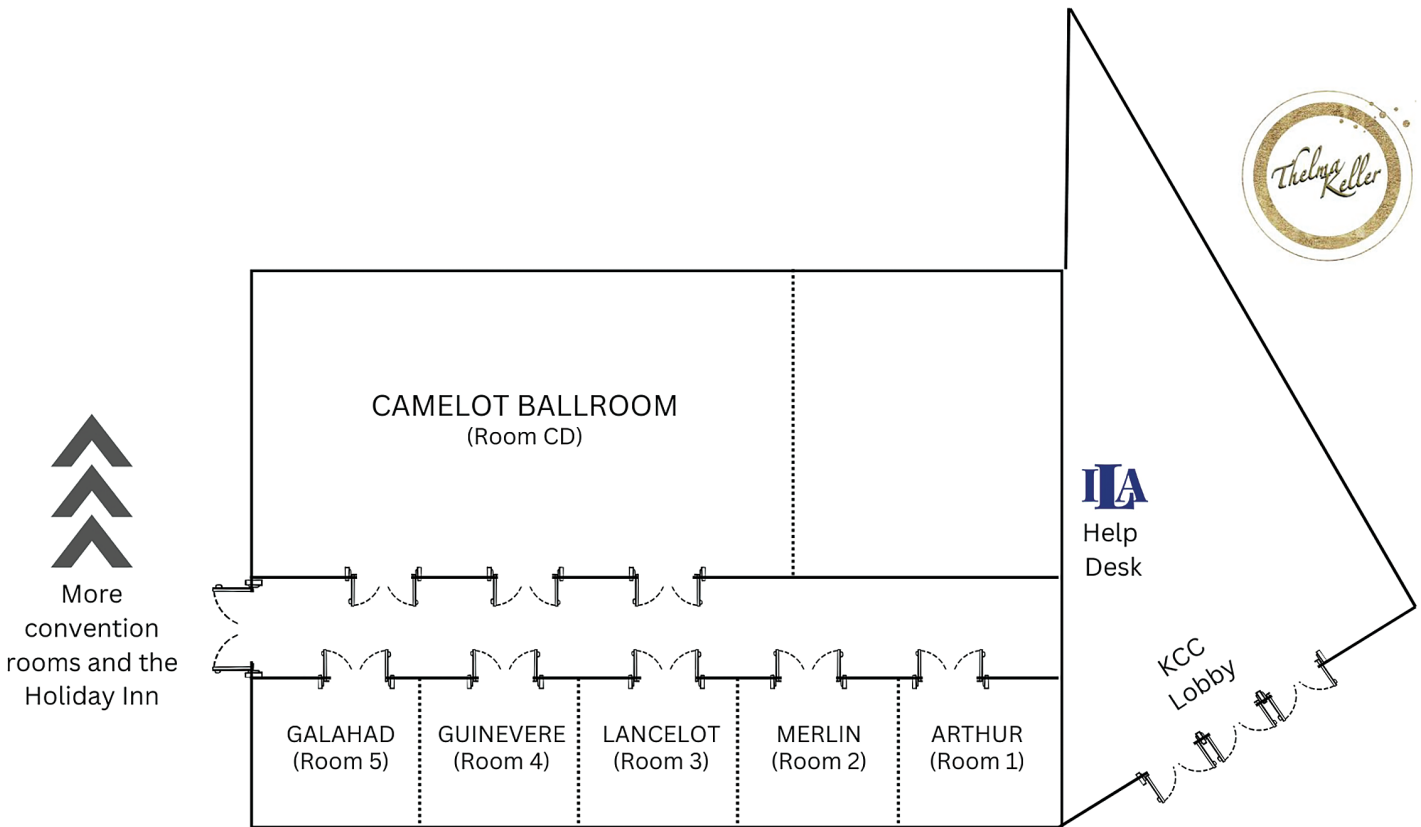
WiFi

Wireless Internet is complementary.

Network: Valued Guest

Password: **Thankyou**

Floorplan



Program Schedule

8:45 – 9:00 A.M.

Welcome to Reaching Forward South

Join Beth Smilack, Reaching Forward South Committee Chair, for a brief welcome with additional conference information before the first Breakout Sessions start.

Speaker: Beth Smilack, Jerseyville Public Library

Location: Camelot Ballroom

9:00 – 10:00 A.M.

Teen Crime Stoppers: A Murder Mystery Teen Program

Teens are intrigued by mysteries and, of course, gossip! In this session, we'll talk about how to set up and run a successful teen murder mystery program. We'll share how we increased our attendance from zero to fifteen teens, as well as discuss how we share this program with our other patrons.

Speakers: Megan Dees, The Hayner Public Library District; Sharon Windham, The Hayner Public Library District

Room: Arthur

Backyard Basics: Sprouting Sustainability with Simple Gardening Workshops or Kits

What's in your backyard? The Williamsville Public Library and Museum transformed a weed patch behind our building into an Outdoor Education Space. See how it was done and how the space creates endless programming opportunities. Whether you have your own green space or not, you can encourage sustainability and life-long learning with simple seed projects. Take part in easy, low-cost activities that you can recreate as active or passive programming for your patrons. Plus, you will get a head start on ideas for iREAD's 2026 theme: *Plant a Seed, Read!*

Speaker: Natalie Albers, Williamsville Public Library

Room: Guinevere

Database Deep Dive

Are you overwhelmed by the new state database options and don't know where to start? Or have you never had the opportunity to use a scholarly database before? Maybe you are an expert with some database tools, but don't know EBSCO as well. We are here to help! Join Illinois Heartland Library System's (IHLS) school membership coordinator Leah Gregory and Reaching Across Illinois Library System's (RAILS) member engagement specialist Jessica Silva as they take you on a deep dive into using the new state databases. This session will briefly cover accessing the database package but will primarily be devoted to using the tools within the package.

Speakers: Leah Gregory, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS); Jessica Silva, Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)

Room: Lancelot

A Stitch in Time: Basic/Budget Book Repair

Practical advice on book repairs for items that circulate. Includes information on choosing the right binding for your library, materials needed and where to find them, and live demonstrations of repairs.

Speaker: Linda Johnson, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Room: Merlin

Roundtable Topic: Collection Development

Join Reaching Forward South Committee member Bobbi Perryman in a roundtable discussion on collection development. This is an opportunity to bring your questions and ideas and network, collaborate, and create meaningful connections between professionals.

Facilitator: Bobbi Perryman, Vespasian Warner Public Library District

Room: Camelot

Program Schedule

10:15 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.

Quick AI Prompts: Enhancing Services with Limited Resources

In this session, attendees will learn practical and actionable AI prompts that can streamline various aspects of their library's operations. Whether it's crafting marketing materials, updating website content, or supporting individual departments, AI prompts can truly help increase efficiency and creativity in any organization.

Speaker: Rene Leyva, Fossil Ridge Public Library District

Room: Arthur

Becoming a Library Advocate for Frontline Staff

Did you know that by working in a library, you are already a library advocate? Using the ILA Ready, Set, Advocate program, attendees will be introduced to the concept of advocacy and be given the tools to build community engagement. Come and learn how to develop your advocacy platform from a member of ILA's Advocacy Committee.

Speaker: Tim Prendergast, Hodgkins Public Library District

Room: Guinevere

Developing Local History Space

This session highlights ways to incorporate local history into your library facility. The Mattoon Public Library has developed a seven room center with museum-type displays that are a destination for local residents, visitors, and to a variety of local groups, including class reunions. The community's history is highlighted at other places in our 26,000 square foot building. The center is led by a volunteer curator. The center's development sparked adult programming, including a recent presentation on Mattoon and the Civil War attended by more than 100 people. The center's development has helped fuel the library's efforts to raise funds and raise the library's community profile.

Speaker: Carl Walworth, Mattoon Public Library

Room: Lancelot

SHARE Reports (Including SimplyReports)

This session focuses on the three main ways of retrieving data from Polaris: searching using the Find Tools, canned Polaris reports and the statistics that are available for each library, and instructions on the creation and publishing of reports using the SimplyReports function.

Speaker: Dena Porter, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Room: Merlin

Roundtable Topic: Intellectual Freedom

Join Reaching Forward South Committee Past Chair Betsy Mahoney in a roundtable discussion on intellectual freedom. This is an opportunity to bring your questions and ideas and network, collaborate, and create meaningful connections between professionals.

Facilitator: Betsy Mahoney, Six Mile Regional Library District

Room: Camelot

11:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

Growing and Thriving in Your Library Career

Do you want to grow as a library staff member? Would you like to take on more responsibility in your current job, or move up within your organization or beyond? John Howard has worked in libraries for seventeen years, from a clerk at Morton Public Library in 2007 to his current position as Director of Mahomet Public Library. Each year, he asks every member of his staff, "How would you like to grow in the coming year?" In just eight years as a director, John has had three staff members leave to become directors at other libraries, promoted multiple staff members to positions of greater responsibility, and mentored and advised library school students who have gone on to full-time positions throughout Illinois. In this session, he will lead participants in envisioning their library future; discuss steps front-line staff can take to move up at their library or within their profession; share where to find library jobs, what to look for, and the role of the MLIS degree; and encourage every participant to grow in their library journey.

Speaker: John Howard, Mahomet Public Library District

Room: Arthur

The Mists of PowerPoint: Learn the Magic of Effective Presentations

In recent years, PowerPoint and its peers have fallen out of favor. Harvard studies assert that it can "damage your brand," and Jeff Bezos has banned presentation slides at Amazon. Honestly, anyone who has watched a speaker read from their slides is probably hoping for the death of PowerPoint. But we shouldn't kill it so fast. Slides are actually vital tools for accessible communication—when they're well-designed. Attend this session to learn the principles and techniques of presentation design that you need to make PowerPoint magic. Bring your laptop or tablet for a hands-on workshop to apply and practice the craft.

Speaker: Carol Hogan-Downey, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Room: Guinevere

Enhancing Customer Service with Personalized Reading Recommendations

This session explores the significance of connecting readers with books they'll love as an integral part of excellent customer service in libraries. Delve into the various ways working with readers positively impacts library services, and discuss how personalized book recommendations not only cater to individual preferences but also foster a sense of community engagement. By understanding the unique interests and needs of each library user, we can create a more inclusive and enriching reading experience for all. This session promises to equip library staff at all levels at any size library with the knowledge and tools needed to provide outstanding customer service through personalized book recommendations.

Speaker: April Mazza, NoveList/EBSCO

Room: Lancelot

Creating Dementia-Friendly Programs Creates Better Programs for Everyone

This session will open with an easy-to-duplicate demonstration of a program designed for those living with dementia and their care partners. It will also provide discussion time for how to adapt the best practices demonstrated in other dementia-friendly programs, or to make general programming more welcoming to them. The goal is that each attendee will build skills to be more welcoming to those living with dementia and their care partners, whether they host a Memory Café-type program, or simply include those living with dementia and care partners at general programming.

Speaker: Lavana Hawkins, Catlin Public Library District

Room: Merlin

Roundtable Topic: Youth Services

Join Reaching Forward South Committee member Erica Hanke-Young in a roundtable discussion on youth services. This is an opportunity to bring your questions and ideas and network, collaborate, and create meaningful connections between professionals.

Facilitator: Erica Hanke-Young, Six Mile Regional Library District

Room: Camelot

Program Schedule

12:30 – 1:30 P.M.

Lunch

Join ILA President Amy Byers for a brief update on the Illinois Library Association. Included in registration for Reaching Forward South is a light luncheon buffet.

Speaker: Amy Byers, Chatham Area Public Library District

Location: Camelot Ballroom

1:30 – 2:30 P.M.

Accessible PDFs—A How-To for Making Accessible Policy Documents, Board Minutes, and Agendas

Learn the fundamental steps to create an accessible PDF document from a Microsoft Word document. We will go over step-by-step instructions on making a Word document accessible, including heading structure, links, table usage, and metadata. Participants will then learn how to convert a Word file to a tagged PDF correctly and ensure that the document meets accessibility standards. Attendees are encouraged to bring a laptop to follow along.

Speaker: John Kirchner, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Room: Arthur

Level Up Your Children and Family Summer Reading Programs

Are you ready to Level Up your library's summer reading program? Join us for this interactive session where we'll talk about iREAD and the *Level Up at Your Library* theme, share creative and engaging programming ideas, and make a sample craft or two to go along with the 2025 summer reading theme.

Speakers: Becca Boland, Illinois Library Association (ILA); Ivy Cowen, Mascoutah Public Library; Erica Hanke-Young, Six Mile Regional Library District

Room: Guinevere

Using NoveList in Your Everyday Work with Readers

You work with readers in a variety of ways every day, and NoveList is here to help. In this session, new and veteran users of NoveList will learn about beyond-the-homepage features and resources to easily match readers with their next favorite book, save time creating reading lists and book displays, quickly provide in-the-moment read-alikes, and more.

Speaker: April Mazza, NoveList/EBSCO

Room: Lancelot

Meet the Mobile Memory Lab

In Spring 2023, Illinois Heartland Library System received a grant to fund the pilot year of the Mobile Memory Lab, a service that partners with libraries across Illinois to help individuals share their local history and genealogical materials with the public through on-site Digitization Day events and inclusion of digitized materials in Illinois Digital Archives. Learn about the Mobile Memory Lab's pilot Digitization Days and see some of the materials that library patrons shared during these visits.

Speaker: Kat Anderberg, Cataloging Maintenance Center

Room: Merlin

Roundtable Topic: Marketing

Join Reaching Forward South Committee member Terry Pierson in a roundtable discussion on marketing. This is an opportunity to bring your questions and ideas and network, collaborate, and create meaningful connections between professionals.

Facilitator: Terry Pierson, Mississippi Valley District Library

Room: Camelot

2:45 – 3:45 P.M.

Beyond Books: Building a Library of Things on a Budget

Libraries are evolving into dynamic community hubs, offering access to more than just books. A Library of Things—a collection of non-traditional items like tools, kitchen appliances, technology, and recreational equipment—can enrich your community, foster sustainability, and attract new patrons. But how do you create such a collection without breaking the bank? In this presentation, we will explore innovative, cost-effective strategies for developing a Library of Things. Attendees will learn how to identify high-demand items tailored to their community's needs; source items through donations, grants, and community partnerships; implement best practices for cataloging, storage, and maintenance on a limited budget; and promote the collection to maximize its use and impact. This session is ideal for library professionals looking to expand their services, strengthen community engagement, and stretch their resources creatively. Join us to discover how to make “things” happen for your library, even on a tight budget!

Speakers: Michelle Hartke, Effingham Public Library; Joel Pikora, Mascoutah Public Library; Alanna Sablotny, Chatham Area Public Library

Room: Arthur

Readers Advisory on the Fly: Facing the Dragon of Indecision

Even if you love Readers Advisory, it can be jarring—even stressful—when a patron wants a recommendation in real-time, especially when you're queuing away from the castle of research resources. Through a mixture of demonstration, practice, and discussion, participants will build confidence in improvising recommendations as well as learn strategies for pre-preparing and using what's around them in the moment, hopefully leaving ready to valiantly face down the Dragon of Indecision.

Speakers: RK Knauer, Champaign Public Library; Naomi Kufel, Champaign Public Library; Ari Wasik, Champaign Public Library

Room: Guinevere

Welcome to Canva-lot: Learn How to Use the Legendary Design Tool

Do you still use MS Word or PowerPoint to design your flyers and signage? Is your social media page filled with unedited photos and fuzzy graphics of unknown provenance? If yes, then this session is for you! Join IHLS Communications & Advocacy Administrator Dr. Carol Hogan-Downey for a hands-on workshop on the fundamentals of design and Canva. Attendees will learn how to craft professional-looking designs, from social media graphics to flyers and more; create quick custom visuals using Canva's vast library of templates; apply basic design principles like balance, typography, and color; and set up a Canva brand kit and team to facilitate collaboration among staff. Bring your laptop or tablet to follow along and troubleshoot. Or just bring a notebook and get your pen draggin'.

Speaker: Carol Hogan-Downey, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

Room: Lancelot

FinWell Workshop: Financial Literacy Doesn't Have to Be Boring

Let's face it, it's difficult to get people to show up for financial literacy presentations. Break the mold with the Illinois Financial Wellness Hub. The FinWell Hub is an online platform that provides free resources to all Illinois residents, making it a go-to trusted site for financial questions. During this interactive workshop, you will learn how to take your patrons on a financial journey with the FinWell Hub passport and explore engaging programming ideas for teens and adults. You will leave this session feeling confident that you can bring these flexible resources to your community. No financial literacy experience needed.

Speaker: Maggie Owen, Illinois State Treasurer's Office

Room: Merlin

Roundtable Topic: Programming

Join Reaching Forward South Committee Chair Beth Smilack in a roundtable discussion on library programming. This is an opportunity to bring your questions and ideas and network, collaborate, and create meaningful connections between professionals.

Facilitator: Beth Smilack, Jerseyville Public Library

Room: Camelot

2025 Exhibitors

Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program

Terisa Lingfelter
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Peoria, IL
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Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC)

Dr. Pamela Thomas
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Edwardsville, IL
www.illinoisheartland.org/services/cmc

Dominican University School of Information Studies

Emma Schmidt-Swartz
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DuPage County Health Department Protect Swimmers 10M

Laura Carlin Cochran
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Wheaton, IL
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Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)

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iLEAD

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Illinois State Library

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www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/home.html

iREAD

Becca Boland
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www.iREADprogram.org

Joliet Junior College Online LTA Certificate Program

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Joliet, IL
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RMC Imaging/ST Imaging

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SHARE (IHLS)

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Today's Business Solutions (TBS)

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Join the Illinois Library Association (ILA) as an Institutional Member and take advantage of exclusive benefits designed to support your library's growth, advocacy, and access to essential resources.

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- Participation in legislative meetups

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- Discounts for conferences and events
- Complimentary iREAD Resource Guide and iREAD grant opportunities
- ILA awards, grants, and scholarships

TO LEARN MORE: SCAN CODE OR EMAIL ILA AT ILA@ILA.ORG

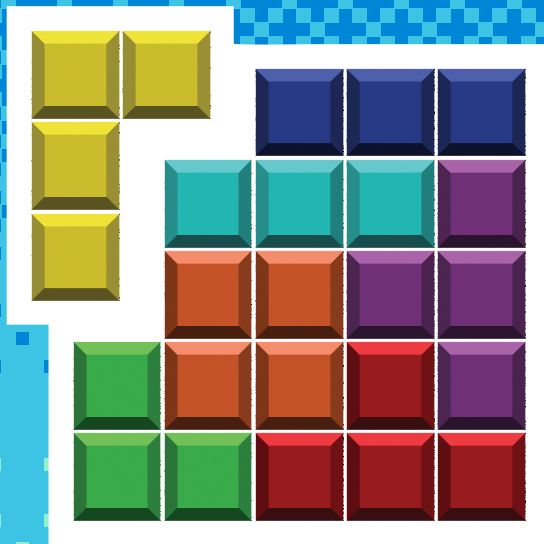
Bluesky: [@illlibraryassoc.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/illlibraryassoc.bsky.social)

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS DEADLINE IS APRIL 4TH