



ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY (ISL)  
LIBRARY SERVICES AND  
TECHNOLOGY ACT (LSTA)  
GRANTS TO STATES  
IMPLEMENTATION  
EVALUATION  
FY2018 TO FY2022

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## Evaluation Summary

In June of 2017, the Illinois State Library (ISL) published its long-range plan for the use of federal Library Services and Technology Act funds from FY2018 to FY2022. The plan set three goals: 1) provide access to information and ideas for all Illinois residents, 2) provide experiences to support lifelong learning and information fluency, and 3) create a reading culture in Illinois. This evaluation report covers LSTA funded and state matched activities directed at achieving these goals between July 2018 and September 2021.

A-1. To what extent did your Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal? Where progress was not achieved as anticipated, discuss what factors (e.g., staffing, budget, over-ambitious goals, partners) contributed?

All three goals outlined in the ISL's long-range plan for FY2018 to FY2022 were achieved.

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 1: Position the Illinois library community to extend library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. They are:

- 1) The ISL has extended library services for all Illinois residents in multiple, diverse ways. These include the very central role that the ISL plays in building and maintaining access to high-quality and accurate bibliographic records through increased efforts to centrally house extensive the digital collection of the ISL and libraries across the state, ISL's role in facilitating the delivery of items across the state, and ISL's role as the facilitator of the ILLINET interlibrary loan system. Through their efforts, 35.5 million items were delivered across the state, nearly 2 million digitized items were housed in a central location, 4.5 million searches were conducted through FirstSearch, and the universe of materials was extended greatly through ILLINET.
- 2) ISL provides items in a variety of formats, with the amounts of digital and print items widely available for circulation growing over 25% from FY18 to FY20 from approximately 88 million to 112 million. Further, grants provided through the ISL provide approximately 14,000 individuals with visual and other disabilities that hinder their ability to read print news materials access to an average of 28,000 hours of original locally produced local news content through the Radio Information Services initiative.
- 3) Due to the unprecedented global pandemic's disruption on the work, school, and life of Illinois residents and the increased demand for high-speed home Internet access, the ISL utilized emergency COVID-19 funds provided by the federal government to greatly expand Wi-Fi services of libraries in communities with high need. This initiative perhaps expanded what the ISL meant by extending library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. However, it demonstrates the vital, ever-changing, role libraries can play in meeting the needs of their communities and how libraries can act as gateways to information and ideas. In addition to providing Internet

access, ISL also provided equipment to local libraries so staff members and patrons could safely be physically at libraries to access information and ideas.

- 4) ISL makes numerous efforts to share information, both programming and performance measures, of libraries available to every library in the state. This gives local libraries frequent easily accessible information they can utilize to drive their decision-making and improve their services based on innovations or best practices of other libraries in the state.

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 2: Position the Illinois library community as an educational anchor by providing opportunities to support education, information fluency, and lifelong learning. They are:

- 1) ISL supports library staff across Illinois receiving extensive training, professional development, and continuing education to enhance their knowledge and advance the delivery of library and information services. ISL has done this through their “Director’s University”, “Elevate”, “Trustee Education”, The Illinois Library Association (ILA) annual conference, AdobeConnect trainings, and Autism Spectrum Disorder-related trainings. These trainings provide Illinois library staff expertise on a variety of topics and help develop leaders at Illinois libraries across the state.
- 2) ISL supports numerous opportunities for the Illinois library community to provide education experiences for residents to gain knowledge and skills. They do this through the extensive Project Next Generation initiative and the 10-Ton Challenge. These opportunities are extended to diverse populations across geography, demographics, and topics. An example of this diversity is Mississippi Valley Library’s “Smart with START (Science, Tech, Art and Reading for Teens),” whose series of activities connected technology with real world music, video editing, and earth science applications. Over half the participants in this example were Hispanic and over half identified as female - both underrepresented groups in STEM fields. Another is Evanston Public Library, who intentionally focused some aspects of their citywide STEM challenge that concluded with a community showcase of a final project on groups underrepresented in STEM fields - black, Latinx, and girls - with 105 of their 215 participants representing those groups.

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 3: Position the Illinois library community to further a literate Illinois by creating a culture that encourages reading. They are:

- 1) The ISL supports extensive initiatives meant to benefit print challenged individuals across the state. ISL operates the Talking Book and Braille Services (TBBS), circulating hundreds of thousands of print and electronic materials. Staff at the TBBS also interact directly with patrons to provide assistance in finding and accessing materials. The ISL also provides state matching funds to local radio stations through the Radio Information Services initiative for those stations to record local and national newspaper articles for

those who are blind or otherwise cannot read. Across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and a yearly average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content.

- 2) Through the Back to Books initiative, the ISL provides resources to support the reading needs of a variety of ages, demographics, regions, and topics across Illinois. This initiative focused on a variety of content and approaches. Many libraries focused on enhancing specific topic areas of their collections to encourage reading for information and enjoyment of all genres, including graphic novels, classic literature, multicultural books, early literacy, leadership, STEAM topics, and career exploration. Other libraries worked alongside schools to integrate books into classroom curriculums, education activities, and independent reading. The goals of many of these projects were to either update old and outdated collections, encourage reluctant readers to read for fun, and increase reading and literacy skills. This also included providing materials and services to homeschooled students. As well, there was a focus on reaching the diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic populations of Illinois. For example, Martinsville CUSD C-3 held two “Book Tasting” events where students, teacher, and paraprofessionals were exposed to different races and cultures by being introduced to new literature and authors that were divided into categories - such as eliminating stereotypes, understanding different ethnicities, and inclusion versus exclusion - which helped all new books get checked out the first week they were made available.

A-2. To what extent did your Five-Year Plan activities achieve results that address national priorities associated with the Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

During the review period, ISL provided grants that addressed all six of the “measuring success focal areas” and their underlying intents. Most attention was given to lifelong learning and information access, followed by institutional capacity. Economic and employment development, human services, and civic engagement were addressed, but not nearly to the same extent as the first three. Many activities addressed more than one focal area or intent. It should also be noted that, when completing progress reports, projects did not always accurately record their focus and intent(s).

The ISL addressed lifelong learning through each of its three goals. Goal 1 addresses lifelong learning through the Radio Information Services (RIS) project and Eastern Illinois University’s library technology expansion. Goal 2 projects such as Engaging Library Patrons, Project Next Generation, and 10-Ton Challenge address the lifelong learning goal. Through the Family Literacy Project, Goal 3 addresses lifelong learning.

The ISL addressed institutional capacity through each of its three goals. Goal 1 initiatives including the Counting Opinions, Cataloging Maintenance Center, Eastern Illinois University’s library technology expansion, and ILLINET administration online learning webinars all address institutional capacity. Through Goal 2’s Targeting Autism Forum, Cataloging Accuracy,

Digitalization of Archives, Continuing Education of Library Workforce, and AdobeConnect trainings the ISL addresses institutional capacity. Under Goal 3, the TBBS addresses institutional capacity.

The ISL addresses access to information through each of its three goals. Goal 1 addresses access to information through the FirstSearch subscription, library delivery services, the WT Cox subscription, and Radio Information Services. Goal 2 addresses access to information through Project Next Generation programming. Goal 3 addresses access to information through the TBBS.

The ISL addresses economic and employment development through Goal 2 and Goal 3. Goal 2's Project Next Generation addresses this focal area. For example, the Bradley Public Library trained students on technologies used by the design and marketing industry. Sparta Public Library's Project Next Generation project focused on teaching students STEAM technologies and skills in the context of career choices and entrepreneurial opportunities. Danville Public Library's Project Next Generation: Occupational Knowledge provides students with the opportunity to explore a variety of job fields that require differing advanced education levels with hands-on experience. Through Goal 3's Back to Book initiative, The CE Brehm Memorial Public Library District purchased materials related to searching for a job to help combat the high post-COVID unemployment in the area.

The ISL addresses civic engagement through Goal 2's Project Next Generation and Goal 3's Back to Books initiatives. Under Project Next Generation, the Lincoln Library provides an example of these efforts as they worked with students to create an audio or video project to address an issue in their local community. In another Project Next Generation project, across three years of funding, Beardstown, which has a large Hispanic immigrant community, used computers, software, and copying/printing equipment to facilitate students' investigation of the history of their community and families. Through Back to Books, Nokomis CUSD#22 purchased books focused on society, equity, and the work others are doing to improve American lives.

The ISL addresses human services through Goal 3's Back to Books initiative. For example, West Frankfort Public Library purchased educational books related to parenting and homeschooling for caretakers experiencing new challenges and stressors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dongola Public Library District used Back to Book funds related to medicine and health. The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired purchased books to support their Expanded Core Curriculum including topics on orientation and mobility, human guide techniques, recognizing cues and landmarks, and social skills. Casey-Westfield CUSD #C-4 purchased books related to personal and family finances.

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)

- Library workforce (current and future)
- Individuals living below the poverty line
- Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed

- Ethnic or minority populations
- Immigrants/refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills
- Families
- Children (aged 0-5)
- School-aged youth (aged 6-17)

Out of the ten groups listed in IMLS' evaluation guidelines, one received at least 10% of total resources (federal plus state match) during the three-year review period: individuals with disabilities, which received 12% of the total funding during the review period. Universally, this funding focused on this with low-vision, blindness, and other sight-based disabilities. Discussion of these contributions occurs under Goal 3 and is not repeated in the entirety for the sake of space. The ISL supports extensive initiatives meant to benefit print-challenged individuals across the state. ISL operates the Talking Book and Braille Services (TBBS), circulating hundreds of thousands of print and electronic materials. Staff at the TBBS also interact directly with patrons to assist in finding and accessing materials. The ISL also provides state matching funds to local radio stations through the Radio Information Services initiative for those stations to record local and national newspaper articles for those who are blind or otherwise cannot read. Across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and a yearly average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content. Further, through the Back to Books initiative, multiple libraries purchased audio and large print books for the benefit of those with visual disabilities.

An important note is that training the library workforce fell just below the 10% threshold to be included. Extensive efforts discussed elsewhere in this evaluation report demonstrate a sizeable, dedicated commitment to training and developing library staff across Illinois. ISL has done this through their "Director's University", "Elevate", "Trustee Education", The Illinois Library Association (ILA) annual conference, AdobeConnect trainings, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)-related trainings. These trainings provide Illinois library staff both topic expertise and help develop leaders at Illinois libraries across the state. Through these various initiatives, the ISL provided thousands of library staff with hundreds of hours of training.

B-1. How have you used any data from the State Program Report (SPR) and elsewhere (e.g., Public Libraries Survey) to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan?

The data from the SPR allowed for the sorting and analysis of the activity levels and financial resources dedicated to each goal. Having the match projects included in the SPR was beneficial to have comparative data for categorizing state funded and LSTA projects as a whole. Further, Excel files that summarized the SPR reports in a coherent manner simplified and organized the data in a way that allowed for qualitative analysis and generating counts of costs and the number of specific groups targeted in projects.

The Illinois Public Library Annual Report data, which is upload into the Public Libraries Survey, was used for developing planned activities proposed in the Five-Year Plan. This collection tool continues to be a valuable tool to identify trends, conduct comparative analysis on public

libraries in Illinois, and make informed decisions for staffing, expenditures, collection development, library usage and programming.

B-2. Specify any modifications you made to the Five-Year Plan. What was the reason for this change?

No formal changes or amendments were made to the Plan since it was submitted. However, the COVID-19 pandemic obviously impacted library services and achieving the five-year plan. Near universally though, initiatives moved forward in modified ways to accommodate the reality of COVID-19. The only referenced initiative that did not come to fruition had to do with the Encyclopedia of Illinois. The ISL will need to determine if that is something they want to bring back in the forthcoming five-year plan.

B-3. How and with whom have you shared data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources? How have you used the last Five-Year Evaluation to inform data collected for the new Five-Year Evaluation? How have you used this information throughout this five-year cycle?

Cumulative data is shared on the ISL's website and during meetings with stakeholders. The list of the top projects funded annually is posted on the ISL website to show the use of grant funds. The intent is to add documents to the LSTA website starting with the current year to document how funds were used under each goal and for which target audiences. The data collection methods for this evaluation mirrored the previous five-year evaluation to allow for reasonable comparisons over time, where possible.

C-1. Identify how you implemented an independent Five-Year Evaluation using the criteria described in the section of this guidance document called Selection of an Independent Evaluator.

As with prior years, the evaluation was carried out by the Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield. The staff involved included a Ph.D. with extensive experience in public program evaluation and a clinical assistant professor of Library Instructional Services at the University of Illinois Springfield.

C-2. Describe the types of statistical and qualitative methods (including administrative records) used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation. Assess their validity and reliability.

The evaluation has relied exclusively on qualitative methods owing to data limitations that preclude the use of more rigorous quantitative methods. Data were drawn from grantee project reports and additional documents, which were frequently rich in descriptive detail and inconsistent in their use of quantitative data and measurement of outcomes. Some grantees provided no numerical evidence on the effects of their efforts. Many others did provide this evidence, but not in a consistent enough way to afford comparisons across grantees. Also, although all project reports indicated the goals and intents projects were based on, the data



collected was often not aligned sufficiently with these specific aims to permit a quantitative assessment of the extent to which they were achieved. Consequently, the evaluation turned to qualitative methods. Using qualitative methods, all grants were analyzed using SPR reports with a focus on understanding what grantees did with the funding and measures they provided to capture the impact of the grant on targeted outcomes. In the current evaluation, credibility has been pursued by sticking as close as possible to what grantees themselves reported when it came to their progress, though differences in such reporting understandably resulted in imperfect measures when attempting to holistically understand the results produced by funding. Where necessary for the purposes of clarification or additional information, the evaluators communicated directly with ISL staff, with which information produced from those exchanges were included in the report as well.

C-3. Describe the stakeholders involved in the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation. How did you engage them?

In line with previous iterations of the evaluation, the report has been based on annual reports submitted by the recipients of all grants and contracts issued during the review period. All of these reports followed a common format. During the time in which grants and contracts were in place, ISL encouraged projects to provide feedback on success and challenges through quarterly reporting. In addition to these direct and detailed reports, the evaluators communicated with ISL staff on any questions they had and included those discussions in the report.

C-4. Discuss how you will share the key findings and recommendations with others.

The evaluation report will be shared with the ISL Advisory Committee at its regularly scheduled meeting later in 2022. The Committee advises ISL in the development of state and federal library plans; provides input in addressing policies, issues, and activities for library development and cooperation among different types of libraries; makes recommendations concerning the evaluation of statewide services; and addresses the use of technology to expand access to information for Illinois citizens. Additionally, at meetings with other stakeholders, the State Library Director's report will include the results of this latest LSTA evaluation. The final evaluation document will be posted on the ISL LSTA web page. Key findings and recommendations with a link to the full evaluation will be announced in the State Library's electronic newsletter, E-News. Also, the report will be shared with all of the members of Illinois' Congressional delegation.

## Evaluation Report Introduction

In June of 2017, the Illinois State Library (ISL) published its long-range plan for the use of federal Library Services and Technology Act funds from FY2018 to FY2022. The plan set three goals: 1) provide access to information and ideas for all Illinois residents, 2) provide experiences to support lifelong learning and information fluency, and 3) create a reading culture in Illinois. This evaluation report covers LSTA funded and state matched activities directed at achieving these goals between July 2018 and September 2021. Illinois expended \$15,306,037.93 in federal LSTA funding, with expenditures of \$8,690,248.97 in matching state funds for a total financial commitment of \$23,996,286.90 to support library programs consistent with the purposes of LSTA. The ISL put the funds to use through 220 separate grants and contracts to public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, the two regional library systems, and other organizations as well as the ISL itself either directly or through external contracts. For clarity's sake, throughout this document FY refers to the year of the LSTA allotment.

**Table 1. Fiscal Year Funding for FY2018 through FY2020 by Source**

	<b>LSTA</b>	<b>Match</b>	<b>Total (Without CARES Act Funding)</b>
<b>2018</b>	\$5,534,042.43	\$3,412,098.92	\$8,946,141.35
<b>2019</b>	\$4,178,484.13	\$2,322,079.26	\$6,500,563.39
<b>2020</b>	\$5,593,511.37	\$2,956,070.79	\$8,549,582.16
<b>Totals</b>	\$15,306,037.93	\$8,690,248.97	\$23,996,286.90

**Table 2. Fiscal Year Funding for FY2018 through FY2020 by State Goal**

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Total per Goal</b>
<b>Access to Information</b>	\$5,459,740.06	\$5,394,250.43	\$6,258,236.64	\$17,112,227.13
<b>Lifelong Learning</b>	\$2,802,807.60	\$479,245.36	\$544,493.39	\$3,826,546.35
<b>Create a Reading Culture</b>	\$683,593.69	\$627,067.60	\$1,746,852.13	\$3,057,513.42

According to the US Census, the population of Illinois is approximately 12,630,000 people. Looking at the state's annual budget including LSTA and matching funds for each year, this translates to an annual cost of approximately 71 cents per Illinois resident for FY18, approximately 52 cents per Illinois resident in FY19, and approximately 77 cents per Illinois resident in FY20. Across the years of this evaluation, approximately 87% of LSTA and state matching funds were invested in statewide initiatives overseen by the ISL, while approximately 13% are distributed to regional and local library entities.

For this evaluation, the team utilized grantee reports, the annual Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR), the Institute of Museum and Library Services State Program Reports (SPR), written responses from ISL staff to evaluation team questions, and additional data requests made by the evaluation team to the ISL as the basis for this evaluation. These methods followed those utilized by prior five-year evaluations for the state, allowing for comparisons to prior Illinois evaluations. Frequently, in this evaluation, the analysis of funds and projects is on both a year-by-year basis and overall for the evaluation period. This approach allows the evaluation to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ISL's performance and how the ISL attempted to adapt and meet its goals in the face of this unprecedented challenge.

### **Retrospective Questions**

A-1. To what extent did your Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal? Where progress was not achieved as anticipated, discuss what factors (e.g., staffing, budget, over-ambitious goals, partners) contributed?

The three goals for the Illinois State Libraries five-year plan are: 1) Position the Illinois library community to extend library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. 2) Position the Illinois library community as an educational anchor by providing opportunities to support education, information fluency, and lifelong learning. 3) Position the Illinois library community to further a literate Illinois by creating a culture that encourages reading.

#### **Goal 1: Position the Illinois library community to extend library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. (Achieved)**

The Illinois LSTA plan calls for addressing this goal through efforts to: 1) Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to share their resources. 2) Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to provide content and resources in a variety of formats. 3) Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to make resources discoverable. 4) Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to make informed decisions to ultimately improve library services for Illinois residents. This goal overwhelmingly received the largest percentage of LSTA funds of the three stated goals. Across each year, the ISL directed at least 85% of LSTA funds towards this goal.

In total, for FY18 through FY20, the ISL distributed total combined funds of \$17,112,227.13 towards the goal of providing access to information and ideas. These funds covered 47 grants in all parts of the state, including urban, suburban, and rural locations.

#### **Projects under Goal 1**

*Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to share their resources*

The ISL used LSTA and matching funds to help operate the statewide delivery system for sharing tangible materials among libraries. This system consists of the Reaching Across Illinois

Library System (RAILS) serving approximately 1,500 libraries in western and northern Illinois, the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) serving approximately 500 libraries in central and southern Illinois, and the Illinois Library Delivery Service (ILDS), which shares academic and research resources statewide.

The ISL also maintains the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan and Reciprocal Borrowing Statistical Survey to collect statewide interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing transaction data. Completion of the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan and Reciprocal Borrowing Statistical Survey was required of all ILLINET member libraries. The ISL also utilizes these data to compile the Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR), which acts as the means of collecting the required core set of national public library data for the Institute of Museum and Library Services Public Libraries Survey. In FY2018, 1,801 libraries contributed to the survey. In FY2019, 1,795 contributed to the survey. In FY20, 1,792 contributed to the survey. The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), a non-profit that maintains library databases across America, maintains the ILLINET. Beginning in FY19, to decrease the administrative burden on local libraries, paying for the subscriptions of their members began being handled by the Illinois Heartland Library System. This service centralizes the payments of approximately 1,200 libraries across the state. In FY19, the subscription cost \$163,703.65. In FY20, the subscription totaled \$192,446.72.

As part of this goal in FY2018, through the statewide ILLINET InterLibrary Loan system and delivery services, the ISL delivered 14,303,767 books, magazines, DVDs, and other cataloged library materials at a total cost of \$3,513,053 (\$2,924,366 in LSTA funding and \$588,687 in state funding) or \$.246 per item. In FY2019, 9,634,966 books, magazines, DVDs, and other cataloged library materials were delivered through the statewide ILLINET InterLibrary Loan system at a total cost of \$2,835,279.28 (\$2,035,866 in LSTA funding and \$799,413.28 in state funding). This amounts to a cost of approximately \$.294 per item. The funding discussed in this paragraph accounts for approximately 50% of total funds when including system area and per capita grants, which are not part of this analysis as the focus of this evaluation is on LSTA funds and state matching funds.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted delivery in FY19, with 33% fewer deliveries than FY18 and an increased cost per item. For FY2020, the statewide ILLINET InterLibrary Loan system delivered 11,551,005 items across the state at a total cost of \$3,339,281.76 or approximately \$.291 per item. While the pandemic still negatively influenced circulation, compared to FY19 in FY2020 there was nearly a 20% increase in circulation.

However, FY2020 totals were still down nearly 20% in comparison to FY18 due to the ongoing pandemic. In total, for the evaluation period, the statewide ILLINET InterLibrary Loan system delivered approximately 35.5 million items at a total cost of \$9,687,614.04, at \$.27 per item for the 2018 to 2022 evaluation period. This all compares to the system delivering approximately 40,000,000 items at \$0.20 per item in the 2013 to 2017 evaluation period. However, when evaluating the performance of the ISL during the 2018 to 2022 evaluation period, the fiscal and resource impact of COVID-19 on both requests and costs associated with the delivery of loaned items is an important factor to keep in mind.

## Specialized Content

As part of providing access to ideas and information, the ISL utilized LSTA funds to purchase specialized serials in print and electronic formats through a WT Cox subscription to meet the needs of state government and to provide resources for Interlibrary Loan statewide. The grant allowed for the purchase of a variety of government-related business references and educational topics including transportation, agriculture, environmental services, and human services. In FY18, the ISL utilized LSTA funds totaling \$60,564.01 to purchase 25 of these serials. In FY19, the ISL used \$55,627.26 of LSTA funds to purchase 104 serials. In FY2020, the ISL used \$58,430.39 of LSTA funds to purchase 100 serials. In total, for the evaluation period, funds provided access to 229 serials at a total cost of \$174,621.66. This compares to 180 serials accessed at a total cost of \$167,137 in the prior evaluation period.

*Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to provide content and resources in a variety of formats.*

As part of providing content, In FY2018, a statewide license meant 1,804 libraries had access to FirstSearch. For FY2018, 1,466,612 total searches were conducted through the statewide license with a daily average of 4,018 searches. FY2018 access to FirstSearch cost \$1,602,854.25. In FY2019, the FirstSearch subscription cost \$1,465,989. Once again, 1,804 libraries had access to FirstSearch. In an increase from FY18, in FY19 there were a total of 2,089,094 searches conducted through the statewide license, with a daily average of 5,724. In FY2020, a statewide license to FirstSearch meant that 1,794 libraries had access at \$1,548,037.51. A total of 945,571 searches were conducted through the state-wide license with a daily average of 2,591 searches. In summary, the ISL made use of slightly over \$4.6 million in LSTA federal funds across all three years of the review period to increase access to online resources through a subscription to FirstSearch.

Compared to FY19, there was a decrease in searches by over 1 million searches in FY2020. Due to the size of the drop, it is important to understand what might be responsible for the decrease. The biggest drop came from academic and college libraries. In FY19, academic and college libraries were responsible for 68% of all searches, with over 1.4 million searches. In FY2020, academic and college libraries constituted just 25% of all searches, at approximately 240,000 searches. It is likely COVID's impact on universities explains this drop. COVID severely disrupted the research productivity of faculty and staff at universities. For example, COVID caused the postponement of 67% of research in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) at research-focused universities.<sup>1</sup> Additional research supports claims of substantial negative consequences for the conducting of research due to the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> With these disruptions to the research of faculty and staff, it is understandable that there would be reductions

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<sup>1</sup> Debra W. Stewart, Ann Kearns Davoren, James R. Neumeister, Erin Knepler, Karen Grigorian, and Abrea Greene. 2021. Graduate Schools Respond to COVID-19. NORC. University of Chicago: Chicago, Illinois. <https://www.norc.org/PDFs/Graduate%20Studies%20COVID/Graduate%20Schools%20Respond%20to%20COVID-19%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Felice J. Levine, Na'ilah Suad Nasir, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Ryan Evelyn Gildersleeve, Katherine J. Rosich, Megan Bang, Nathan E. Bell, and Matthew A. Holsapple. The Impact of COVID-19 on Early Career Scholars and Doctoral Students. American Educational Research Association. [https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/VoicesFromTheField\\_WEB\\_final.pdf](https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/VoicesFromTheField_WEB_final.pdf)

in searches through academic and college libraries. Beyond faculty, the pandemic also negatively impacted student research projects and reading load for courses or degree requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Simply put, across faculty, staff, and students less research occurred in the university setting during FY2020, which reflects the lower use of FirstSearch. Given a sizeable focus of universities is research, the impact is unsurprisingly large. However, while university and academic use of FirstSearch were down there was an increase in FY2020 compared to FY19 in the use of FirstSearch for public (increasing 3.8%) and K-12 (increasing a sizeable 58%) libraries, demonstrating an important role of the FirstSearch subscription for the access to information and ideas across Illinois. Therefore, it is highly likely that were it not for the COVID-19 pandemic, FirstSearch searches would have been even greater.

### Content in a variety of formats

Illinois has a goal to not only provide content, but to provide content in a variety of formats. In FY18, Illinois libraries reported having a combined total of 39,393,893 print items and 48,334,417 electronic items, for a combined 87,728,310 items. In FY19, Illinois libraries reported having a combined total of 38,397,091 print items and 57,254,308 electronic items, for a combined 95,651,399 items. In FY20, Illinois libraries reported having a combined total of 37,805,583 print items and 74,458,183 electronic items, for a combined 112,263,766 items. This year-over-year increase demonstrates a steady effort from the ISL to provide content and resources in a variety of formats for residents of Illinois.

Three notable examples of grants given specifically to provide content and resources in a variety of formats are:

- Under this goal, in FY18 the ISL distributed \$36,415 to the Centralia Regional Public Library District (CRPLD). Through the project Serving Our Public, the Centralia Regional Public Library District enhanced the library's collection, and new books provided increased access to reading materials for the rural communities served by the library. The new books provided current and accurate information to support primarily adult patrons with educational resources that helped them advance in life and with popular reading materials that supported their recreational reading requests. Access to information is a fundamental need and a vital service that the library provided to the rural communities of Centralia, Hoffman, Irvington, Sandoval, and Odin, IL. Combined, this district serves 29,132 residents spread out over 235 square miles. This project aligned with the federal LSTA priority to develop library services that provide all users access to information through information access; increased holdings in a shared catalog; and improved users' ability to discover information resources. The CRPLD acquired 1,148 items using these funds.
- FY19, the ISL provided Eastern Illinois University's Center for Student Innovation a grant totaling \$19,986.27 (all LSTA funding) to transform a space in their Booth Library

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<sup>3</sup> Katie Mezler. 2020. The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Research Projects. Sage Publishing: Los Angeles, California. <https://group.sagepub.com/blog/research-methods/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-research-projects>; Doug Lederman. 2020. How Teaching Changes in the (Forced) Shift to Remote Learning. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/04/22/how-professors-changed-their-teaching-springs-shift-remote>

into an Active Learning Space and Design Lab. The goal of this Design Lab was to engage all library patrons with emerging technologies, including 3D printers, ultra-high-definition monitors, wireless screen sharing, 3D and professional-grade video recording, and virtual reality equipment. Eastern Illinois University faculty were to work with librarians to train them in innovative ways of teaching and learning in the active learning space. Library staff was then meant to help to train K-12 teachers from across the region to take active learning ideas back to their schools. EIU used the funds to purchase a desktop scanner, a Google Jamboard, virtual reality equipment, podcasting bundles, microphones, an Owl conference device, an Apple TV, noise-canceling headphones, an iPad Pro, a camera, microphones, microphone stands, cables, pop filters, a Surface Book 3, and a Surface Pro 7. Among the new projects launched with this technology are a library podcast, virtual exhibits, enhanced conference calls, and virtual reality learning. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the ability of the library to acquire equipment and make the equipment available to members of their community, but the equipment was purchased and the space set up for future use.

- A key initiative across all three years under evaluation that focuses on providing content in a variety of formats is Radio Information Services grants given through matching state funds. Through this initiative, staff and volunteers of local radio stations record readings of local and national newspapers which are then aired on special receivers for those who cannot read print materials. A deeper discussion of this initiative occurs later in this evaluation as the project focuses on those with disabilities that hinder their ability to read. However, across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and an average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content for a total cost of approximately \$1,032,611.00.

*Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to make resources discoverable.*

### Digitization Efforts

One-way Illinois sought to make resources discoverable was through housing digitized items in a centralized location. In FY18, 493,910 items were housed at a total cost of \$15,216.24. In an increase from FY18, in FY19 647,315 items were housed at a total cost of \$15,216.24. This is a noticeable increase in the number of items housed from FY19 for a similar cost as in FY18. In FY2020, again ISL spent \$15,216.24 of state funds on these efforts. In an increase from FY19, in FY2020 the ISL housing 716,673 items. As well, each year in the evaluation period saw an increase in the number of digitized items housed annually, demonstrating a continued commitment to these efforts from the ISL. Illinois residents were able to benefit from unique historical and cultural materials made accessible via the Illinois Digital Archives (IDA) from their home, work, or library computers or electronic devices. This initiative ensures preservation and prevents the loss of a collection that includes local and Illinois history as photographs, slides, glass negatives, oral histories, manuscripts, letters, federal documents, postcards, posters, videos, newspapers, and maps.

## Accuracy and Cataloging of Resources

As part of making resources discoverable, the ISL gives time and resources to ensure the accuracy of the shared Illinois catalog. In FY2018, the Illinois state government provided the ISL \$54,460 for this process. This process assured 1,302,062 items were reviewed for accuracy and made discoverable in the shared online catalogs. FY2019, the state of Illinois spent \$46,110 on a similar process. In FY2019, 790,541 were reviewed for accuracy in the catalog. This separate project was not continued in FY2020.

As part of assuring records in the shared catalog are accurate, steps are taken to assure records that cannot be matched through computer records are accurately matched and cataloged manually. As well, this process involves work to remove duplicate records, ensure bibliographies are complete and catalog special collections. This process includes not only staff in the Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC), part of the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), doing this work themselves, but also staff training for library staff across the state of Illinois to also do this work.

In FY2018, LSTA provided \$122,977.56 for these purposes, which was distributed through one of the two grants under goal one that did not remain with the ISL. The primary goal of this grant was to provide cataloging services and training on cataloging to local libraries. A special focus was given on works related to local history, genealogy, local authors, and special collections. Using this grant, the CMC cataloged 1,854 items for local libraries, including a collection in Bulgarian. The IHLS produced a near-monthly webinar series and two additional specialized webinars. They also developed live classes on book and audiovisual cataloging, with attendance at the three sessions totaling 160 staff members of local libraries. The IHLS also developed online self-paced versions of these courses. Additionally, IHLS staff completed transcription and cataloging of a collection of immigration naturalization papers held by the Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and transcribed a collection of oral histories for Marshall Public Library.

In FY2019, the ISL distributed one grant of \$366,750.67, consisting entirely of funds provided by the Illinois state government. As with FY18, the FY19 grant focused on matching, removal of duplicated records, training, and cataloging special collections. Using this grant, the CMC cataloged 818 items for local libraries, including items in Vietnamese. There were four special projects as part of this funding. The first focused on cataloging sheet music for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. The second was a continuation of the transcription work for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. A third project focused on translating and cataloging materials in Arabic. The last focused on cataloging braille materials. The CMC held multiple trainings with a combined registration of over 500 people. They also continued to produce and host online, self-paced, versions of these trainings.

In FY2020, the ISL distributed one grant of \$439,357.05 for these purposes. This grant continued to focus on matching, removal of duplicated records, training, and cataloging special collections. There were two special collection projects included in this grant. 1,364 items were cataloged for local libraries including items in German, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The CMC



completed the cataloging of nearly 1,300 sheets of music for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. They also continued working on transcribing interviews for the Marshall Public Library. Work continued on the translation and cataloging of materials in Arabic and braille. While the CMC held trainings in FY20, it is unclear how many people attended these trainings, as that information was not reported in the FY20 report.

### The Encyclopedia of Illinois

As described to the evaluation team by ISL staff, the Encyclopedia of Illinois was a “casualty of COVID” due to the effects of the pandemic on ISL staff and resources.

*Support the efforts of the Illinois library community to make informed decisions to ultimately improve library services for Illinois residents.*

ISL contracted with Counting Opinions to collect in a centralized, accessible, database comparable data on the performance data of each library in Illinois and create an online tool called LibPas to access the data. LibPas includes comparable data in the following areas: Identifying Information, Building Data, Referenda, Board Members, Facilities, Assets and Liabilities, Operating Receipts, Operating Expenditures, Capital Revenue and Expenditures, Personnel, Service Hours/Visits, Programs & Attendance, Registered Users, Resources Owned, Use of Resources, Patron Services, Automation, Internet, E-Rate, and Staff Development. Each contributing library in Illinois had access to performance data on not only their library, but other libraries across the state. This data is also utilized to compile the Illinois Public Library Annual (IPLAR), which is shared with local libraries and the general public.

In FY2018, 642 libraries contributed, and had access to, the LibPas tool. The cost of this data collection and tool was \$54,200. In FY19, 640 libraries contributed, and had access to, the LibPas tool. This amounts to essentially all public libraries in Illinois. The cost of this data collection and tool was \$58,100. In FY20, 643 libraries contributed, and had access to, the LibPas tool. The cost of this data collection and tool was again \$58,100. While the tool allows libraries to generate their own reports for comparison, it does not track how many libraries utilize the tool or how often they do so. ISL staff anecdotally report that the local libraries across the state-run multiple reports a month and drive decision-making with those reports. However, there was no systematic effort to track or understand how exactly these reports are utilized by local libraries. One suggestion for the future would be for the ISL to develop a tracking system and to routinely work with local libraries to understand how the reports are being used.

Another key initiative during the evaluation period aimed at improving library services has been a complete redesign of the Learning Library (L2) platform during FY20. This platform is used by approximately 1,800 libraries across the RAILS and IHLS to house a centralized collection of library events, staff directories, and the required annual library certification system. The redesign was reportedly necessary to improve the security, usability, and flexibility of the platform as the L2 system is key to the daily operations of libraries across the state. The ISL provided \$176,000 (all state funding) towards this redesign.

## Did the ISL Achieve Goal 1?

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 1: Position the Illinois library community to extend library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. They are:

- 1) The ISL has extended library services for all Illinois residents in multiple, diverse ways. These include the very central role that the ISL plays in building and maintaining access to high-quality and accurate bibliographic records through increased efforts to centrally house extensive the digital collection of the ISL and libraries across the state, ISL's role in facilitating the delivery of items across the state, and ISL's role as the facilitator of the ILLINET interlibrary loan system. Through their efforts, 35.5 million items were delivered across the state, nearly 2 million digitized items were housed in a central location, 4.5 million searches were conducted through FirstSearch, and the universe of materials was extended greatly through ILLINET.
- 2) ISL provides items in a variety of formats, with the amounts of digital and print items widely available for circulation growing over 25% from FY18 to FY20 from approximately 88 million to 112 million. Further, grants provided through the ISL provide approximately 14,000 individuals with visual and other disabilities that hinder their ability to read print news materials access to an average of 28,000 hours of original locally produced local news content through the Radio Information Services initiative.
- 3) Due to the unprecedented global pandemic's disruption on the work, school, and life of Illinois residents and the increased demand for high-speed home Internet access, the ISL utilized emergency COVID-19 funds provided by the federal government to greatly expand Wi-Fi services of libraries in communities with high need. This initiative perhaps expanded what the ISL meant by extending library services for all Illinois residents by providing access to information and ideas. However, it demonstrates the vital, ever-changing, role libraries can play in meeting the needs of their communities and how libraries can act as gateways to information and ideas. In addition to providing Internet access, ISL also provided equipment to local libraries so staff members and patrons could safely be physically at libraries to access information and ideas.
- 4) ISL makes numerous efforts to share information, both programming and performance measures, of libraries available to every library in the state. This gives local libraries frequent easily accessible information they can utilize to drive their decision-making and improve their services based on innovations or best practices of other libraries in the state.

The evaluators conclude that ISL has **ACHIEVED** Goal 1.

**Goal 2: Position the Illinois library community as an educational anchor by providing opportunities to support education, information fluency, and lifelong learning (Achieved).**

The ISL's five-year plan outlined addressing this goal through two projects. First, by supporting educational experiences for the library workforce and leadership to gain knowledge and enhance skills. Second, by supporting opportunities for the library community to provide educational experiences for Illinois residents to gain knowledge and enhance skills.

In 2018, 35 grants were awarded as part of "lifelong learning." The total budget of FY2018 grants equaled \$2,802,807.60. Of these funds, the Illinois state government provided \$2,131,633.44 while \$671,174.16 came from LSTA funding.

In 2019, 31 grants were awarded as part of "lifelong learning." 30 grants were funded using LSTA funding while one was funded using Illinois government funds. The total budget of FY2019 grants equaled \$479,245.36, with \$5,774.76 coming from the Illinois government and the remainder from LSTA funds. While funding decreased in FY19 compared to FY18, this is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer events could be held and those events that could be held had size and distance restrictions on them, in addition to safety concerns. This all likely discouraged participation, even when events could be held.

In FY20, the ISL issued 31 grants under the goal of "lifelong learning". Two of these 31 remained with the ISL to fund statewide initiatives while the ISL distributed the remaining 29. \$542,124.99 of LSTA funding and \$2,368.40 of state funding for a total of \$544,493.39 went towards funding these 31 grants.

**Projects under Goal 2**

*Support educational experiences for the library workforce and leadership to gain knowledge and enhance skills.*

The ISL held multiple training sessions as part of this goal under a broad banner of "Continuing Education to Support Library Workforce."

- A grant managed by the Illinois Library Association (ILA) funds "Directors University." "Directors University" is a weeklong training in the summer and includes sessions on the Freedom of Information Act, records retention, library policies, library security, building maintenance, emergency preparedness, budgets and finance, personnel and hiring policies, collection development, the future of libraries, and a broad overview of the Illinois library system. After the training, the ILA conducts a participant survey to understand if the training improved participant confidence in the areas covered. In FY18, there were 50 participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ILA transitioned "Directors University" from being a weeklong in-person training to being a series of weekly webinars beginning in FY19 with 52 attendees. In FY20, there were 38 participants in "Director's University." In total, 140 staff members from Illinois libraries attended "Director's University" training during the FY18 to FY20 period under

evaluation. For each year of the evaluation period, project reports claim that participants in the “Director’s University” report they are more confident in the areas covered by the training, though more details are missing to support those claims.

- “Elevate” is a statewide library initiative to recruit and nurture future Illinois library leaders, managed by the ILA. “Elevate” is a one-day program for library staff who want to understand the fundamentals of strengths-based leadership, including gaining insights into their strengths. Participants identify a leadership project that they hope to take on in their library or with the community they serve and receive advice from a mentor as well as from fellow participants. Together, this program allows participants to learn what their strengths are and how they can apply those strengths to leadership in a real-world project. In FY18, there were 91 participants. The ILA conducted a participant survey after the event. 93.75% of participants responded that applying what they learned would help improve library services to the public. In FY19, ILA canceled “Elevate” due to COVID. COVID-related shutdowns occurred mere weeks before the FY19 training was to occur, which did not give enough time to transition to an online format. In FY20, there were 92 participants. In total then, 183 staff members from Illinois libraries attended “Elevate” training during the period under evaluation.
- “Trustee Education” consists of three workshops aimed at public library board members to increase their knowledge about their role as trustees. Over the evaluation period, workshop topics covered how libraries navigated the various stages of COVID-19, developing a diversity, equity, and inclusion mindset, and a bootcamp focusing on basic finance, succession planning, and trustee-director relations. The FY20 workshop series were the most attended sessions in the history of ILA’s trustee education program with 420 participants. The ILA administered a survey at the end of the event. 72.5% of the attendees said they had an excellent understanding of the workshop material.
- The ILA holds their annual state conference. The FY19 conference was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and attended by 900 people. The FY20 conference focused on how libraries can respond to the disruption that COVID-19 caused and what steps libraries are taking to increase awareness of systemic racism, social injustice, and other current issues. In FY20, 506 people attended the virtual conference.
- In FY18, this series of “Continuing Education to Support Library Workforce” trainings cost a total of \$40,443, all from LSTA funding. In FY19, these trainings cost \$16,290.51, all LSTA funds. In FY20, these trainings cost \$21,450, all LSTA funding.

An additional instance of training for the library workforce comes from online continuing education opportunities. Educational webinars were created and presented using the web conferencing software AdobeConnect. Especially for those library staff that faced challenges traveling to in-person sessions, this subscription service allowed the ISL to deliver affordable, online training statewide. These trainings, which were also available as recordings, focused on

topics such as how to fill out a grant application, grant reporting requirements, and changes in the state's administrative rules to ensure legal compliance. The webinars improved the capacity of libraries across the state to access important information and requirements. In FY18, 134 participants attended the training live and an undetermined amount accessed a webinar version of the training at their convenience. The FY18 cost was \$4,998, all from state funding. In FY19, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this training was split into 42 different webinars that could be accessed at any time. The average number of library staff who viewed a training was 20 per training for a total of 840. However, records do not specify how many of those 840 views were unique viewers or if it were the same 20 viewers watching all 42 webinars. Therefore, unlike in FY18, it is unclear how many individual staff members attended the training. The FY19 cost was \$5,774.76, all coming from state funding. Similar to FY19, in FY20, this training was available as 42 different webinars. In line with FY19, the FY2020 project report claims all 42 webinars were accessed an average of 20 times. The FY20 cost was \$2,368.40, all coming from state funding. Due to the two ways of delivering the trainings and how participation is tracked on the online webinars compared to the in-person training, making comparisons of participation in these trainings was not possible nor complete over the years.

An innovative initiative focused on how libraries can better serve those patrons with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their family members. This initiative began with discussion forums and evolved into trainings beginning in FY16 continuing partly into the period of this evaluation. The ISL has contracted with Russ Bonanno, Director, The Autism Program of Illinois (TAP), Dominican University, and Syracuse University to develop and deliver innovative, multi-faceted, and replicable training programs designed to improve library services and programs for ASD communities in Illinois and the country. The ISL held the FY18 forum in-person, with the 17 training sessions recorded and uploaded to YouTube, which allowed for increased viewing. Across in-person attendance and online viewing, there were a reported 1,615 interactions across the 17 training sessions. In FY18, this training cost \$99,069.84.

Lastly, in FY20, as part of preparing their staff for an initiative around gender identity and equity, the Chicago Public Library held a special training for their staff with a focus on those topics. 50 staff members attended the training. 100% of the staff who attended the training reported learning something new. Another 89% felt confident about applying their learning about gender and equity in their branch. Further, 89% responded that they would seek more professional development resources on gender equity. Lastly, 94% responded that they would utilize library resources related to gender and equity.

*Support opportunities for the library community to provide educational experiences for Illinois residents to gain knowledge and enhance skills.*

### Project Next Generation

The ISL's main initiative to foster lifelong learning was Project Next Generation, a series of grants to public libraries to use technology and social activities to engage at-risk students mostly in middle and high school. It is impossible to determine the total number of people who participated in Project Next Generation based on the way projects reported their work and changes in delivery due to COVID-19. Some programs reported out the number of individual students who participated while others reported out a total number of participants, including

students who perhaps attended multiple sessions. As well, live sessions and self-paced webinars or videos posted on YouTube reported participation differently, as we discussed with the AdobeConnect training. Further, multi-year projects typically did not attempt to provide an unduplicated count of participants across time. Broadly speaking then, this section will discuss “interactions” which reflects at the very least a consistently discussed measure. By the nature of the reporting of the data, this will likely be a flawed count and says nothing of the substance or quality of these “interactions” or the initiatives. When available, this section will use examples to highlight successes and challenges across the Project Next Generation initiatives.

For FY18, 31 libraries received a grant for Project Next Generation under the “lifelong learning” goal. In FY18, there were 11,036 interactions with Project Next Generation activities, whether they be in-person or virtual attendance live or viewing of a recording later. The total cost of these FY18 Project Next Generation initiatives was \$526,663.32, with all funding coming from LSTA funds.

In FY19, there were 6,380 interactions across 29 Project Next Generation initiatives. Given the focus of the project on middle and high school students and the disruptive nature of COVID on education, it is not surprising that there were fewer interactions with Project Next Generation initiatives in FY19 than FY18. For FY19, Project Next Generation was the largest initiative under the “lifelong learning” goal. The total funds spent on Project Next Generation initiatives in FY19 was \$454,195.74, all coming from LSTA funding.

In FY20, the ISL awarded 27 grants as part of Project Next Generation, totaling \$518,220.89, all of which were LSTA funds. In a big increase from FY18 and FY19, in FY20 there were 26,494 interactions in Project Next Generation funded initiatives. For FY19, Project Next Generation continued to be the largest initiative under the “lifelong learning” goal.

A notable key innovation in FY20, which helps explain the large jump in interactions with Project Next Generation initiatives, involves an initiative of the Chicago Public Library. As part of a new initiative, the Chicago Public Library created 72 trainings that were posted to YouTube and accessible around the world. These videos were accessed a reported average of 191 times for over 13,000 views. However, given that each of the 72 trainings are on similar topics it is likely there were repeat viewers. These tutorials ranged in length from approximately 3 minutes to over 30 minutes. In support of these videos and the broader initiative, the Chicago Public Library also held an in-person fair focused on the same themes, which had a reported attendance of 1,000 people. Lastly, as part of this broader initiative, the Chicago Public Library held four live interviews with experts in the topic area, with a reported attendance of 264 people, in addition to an unknown number who watched the recordings later. At over 15,000 combined interactions, this multi-pronged initiative had more reported interactions than all other Project Next Generation initiatives combined. This initiative cost \$40,000, all of which were LSTA funds. While the diversity of Illinois negates moving all initiatives in the same direction, the Chicago Public Library approach to content delivery may provide a useful template for other libraries around the state to deliver content across a variety of topics in the future.

Libraries who participated in Project Next Generation offered a variety of hands-on educational experiences to improve technology skills of at-risk students. 41 libraries participated in Project

Next Generation, with 17 of them receiving funding for all three years, and 11 receiving funding for 2 years. Through post-activity surveys, the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they learned a new skill, increased their confidence with technology, or would be likely to attend another library event in the future.

Despite the strong emphasis on technology, robotics, and computer science, many activities applied STEM topics to a variety of different fields and topics - including art, history, biology, literacy, career exploration in order to appeal to a broad selection of students and their varying interests.

- Geneseo Public Libraries’ “Computer Concepts and Photo Fun” provided students with the opportunity to take photos and explore career resources to create a digital booklet to present at a career night.
- Participants at Lillie M. Evans Library participated with Lego and robotics take-home packs to complete monthly-themed “missions” to display at the library.
- At Thornton Public Library, participants learned and applied various art techniques like graffiti art, nair art, interior design, story writing, and watercolor.
- Joliet Public Library offered virtual one-on-one guitar lessons covering reading music, music terminology and guitar technique.

Most of these projects targeted low-income youth and underrepresented groups in the STEM fields who may not have access to technology or a reliable way to access these materials. Due to the pandemic, many libraries shifted to virtual programming, recordings, and take-home activities. While there was a dip in interactions, these asynchronous alternatives led to new first-time attendees who hadn’t been able to previously attend in-person programming due to time constraints, conflicting schedules, or the lack of transportation.

- Mississippi Valley Library’s “Smart with START (Science, Tech, Art and Reading for Teens),” whose series of activities connected technology with real world music, video editing and earth science applications, noted that over half their participants were Hispanic and over half identified as female - both underrepresented groups in STEM fields.
- In FY19, Carbondale Public Library attracted 29 new participants to their STEAM programs, creating a racially and culturally diverse group from the local area, allowing for social growth through positive peer reactions.
- Evanston Public Library intentionally focused some aspects of their citywide STEM challenge that concluded with a community showcase of a final project on groups underrepresented in STEM fields - black, Latinx, and girls - with 105 of their 215 participants representing those groups.

Providing avenues for new social networks, making new friends, and building intergenerational relationships were major themes in Project Next Generation. These after-school programs,

workshops, and sessions provided trainings on computers, software and technology devices while also allowing mentors to help students develop self-confidence and pride in their skills. There was often an emphasis on building up the soft skills of socialization, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and self-esteem in the pursuit of becoming more familiar with technologies. This sense of building a place of community occurred both internally with their peers and mentors in the program, as well as passing on their newfound knowledge to others in the external community.

- Lincoln Library’s participants created an audio or video project addressing an issue in their community – mainly related to bullying at home, at school and on social media.
- Alpha Park Public Library conducted a hands-on technology program on recording and editing veterans’ history, local community places and events with the Illinois Veterans History Project.
- Schaumburg Township’s Tech Bytes: Serving Technology to Teens After School Program served 70+ middle school students who learned about computer science and 3D printing from two technologically-advanced high school peer mentors.
- Kankakee’s mentoring program focused on reading development, increased self-esteem, and positive social and education development for students ages 10-15. The program found success with 85% participants reporting an increased time spent reading, 40% demonstrated improved writing skills, and over 80% received student evaluation ratings of very good or good in the area of student behavior and attendance.

Gaining literacy skills was at the forefront of the 10-Ton Challenge grant. The ISL, the Illinois Literacy Foundation and Thrift Books purchased books for at-risk students in Grades 6-12 that were intended for them to take home and keep, which would help them be better students and provided a foundation for a successful future in order to bridge the literacy gap. In FY18, FY19 and FY20, 41 school districts in 10 counties with the highest dropout rates participated with over 11,000 students in grades 6-12 given fiction and nonfiction books each year of the grant.

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 2: Position the Illinois library community as an educational anchor by providing opportunities to support education, information fluency, and lifelong learning. They are:

- 1) ISL supports library staff across Illinois receiving extensive training, professional development, and continuing education to enhance their knowledge and advance the delivery of library and information services. ISL has done this through their “Director’s University”, “Elevate”, “Trustee Education”, The Illinois Library Association (ILA) annual conference, AdobeConnect trainings, and ASD-related trainings. These trainings provide Illinois library staff expertise on a variety of topics and help develop leaders at Illinois libraries across the state.



- 2) ISL supports numerous opportunities for the Illinois library community to provide education experiences for residents to gain knowledge and skills. They do this through the extensive Project Next Generation initiative and the 10-Ton Challenge. These opportunities are extended to diverse populations across geography, demographics, and topics. An example of this diversity is Mississippi Valley Library's "Smart with START (Science, Tech, Art and Reading for Teens)," whose series of activities connected technology with real world music, video editing, and earth science applications. Over half the participants in this example were Hispanic and over half identified as female - both underrepresented groups in STEM fields. Another is Evanston Public Library, who intentionally focused some aspects of their citywide STEM challenge that concluded with a community showcase of a final project on groups underrepresented in STEM fields - black, Latinx, and girls - with 105 of their 215 participants representing those groups.

The evaluators conclude that ISL has **ACHIEVED** Goal 2.

### **Goal 3: Position the Illinois library community to further a literate Illinois by creating a culture that encourages reading (Achieved)**

The ISL's five-year plan outlines two projects under this goal. First, provide and support library services for print challenged Illinois residents. Second, support the Illinois library community's efforts to encourage reading.

*Provide and support library services for print challenged Illinois residents.*

For this goal, the targeted outcome was an increase in access to library services and materials for print challenged Illinois residents.

Of the 220 grants issued across the three years under evaluation, 26 focused on print challenged individuals across the state. These totaled \$3,057,513.42 of which \$246,860.14 is LSTA funding and \$2,810,653.28 comes from state funding. In total, individuals with visual disabilities accounted for 12% of all ISL funding during the evaluation period.

There are several components to Illinois' services to provide those with low vision, blindness, or other physical disability with access to reading materials:

ISL operates the Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS) as a regional library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Illinois residents with a temporary or permanent print disability such as low vision, blindness, physical dexterity issues, and organic reading disabilities such as dyslexia that prevents them from reading or holding printed material are eligible for services provided by TBBS. In total, across the three years covered in this evaluation, the TBBS received \$2,316,124.22 of which \$2,143,491.22 came from state funding and \$172,633.00 came from LSTA funding. During this time the TBBS circulated 1,210,422 items including books, magazines, DVDs, and descriptive videos. The TBBS staff had 66,198

interactions with patrons. As well, through the Braille and Audio Reading Download program of the Library of Congress, TBBS patrons downloaded 349,388 to their electronic devices. The COVID-19 pandemic severely harmed TBBS services, which hurt circulation, operations, access to the Braille and Audio Reading Download program, and reader advisory services. As well, the government of Illinois did not consider the TBBS an “essential service” at the beginning of the pandemic, though it became one during the pandemic.

An additional initiative known as “Radio Information Services” focused on providing services to those with visual and other disabilities or otherwise unable to read print materials involves a series of grants to provide participants with special radio receivers, free of charge, to receive vital local community information and the news found in local and regional newspapers. Further, these grants fund the creation of content based on information published in local and national newspapers and magazines and then sent over the special receivers.

Grantees were inconsistent with how they report any measurable successes such as number of users or number of hours of original content produced. However, rough estimates of both along with the financial costs of the program give us a sense of the impact of the program. Across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and an average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content for a total cost of approximately \$1,032,611.00, all of which came from state matching funds. Additionally, their services were available to an unknown number of residents in healthcare, long-term care, and educational facilities. A notable contribution of the Radio Information Services (RIS) initiative was the geographic spread of services. Across the 11 agencies awarded RIS grants during the evaluation period residents across the state of Illinois had access to their services. This spread covered large metros such as Chicago, where approximately two-thirds of the Illinois population lives, through the Chicagoland Radio Information Services to small rural areas such as those covered Wabash Valley College, Southern Illinois University, and Lewis and Clark Community College. The COVID-19 pandemic had a mixed impact on the service, as some stations actually gained more volunteers and were able to produce more content while others lost volunteers and content. The impact may depend on the types of volunteers and the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy. Areas where there were more COVID-19 related layoffs perhaps had access to a larger pool of people wanting to volunteer some of their time. In comparison, radio stations who relied heavily on college students were likely harmed by students being sent home and continuing their education remotely.

### *Support the Illinois library community’s efforts to encourage reading*

The Back to Books initiative was ISL’s primary way of providing resources to support the reading needs for people of all ages. 91 public libraries improved the quality of their collections by providing updated books for both research and independent reading that supported the reading needs of children, youth and adults. Additionally, 96 school districts participated in Back to Books projects by purchasing books and updating their collections to support the education and curricular needs of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Many grantees focused on enhancing specific topic areas of their collections to encourage reading for information and enjoyment of all genres, including graphic novels, classic literature,

multicultural books, early literacy, leadership, STEAM topics, and career exploration. While the pandemic created some issues with proposed timelines due to staff health issues, delayed shipping of materials, and the availability of book titles, most libraries aimed to develop book displays, marketing materials, or programs that engaged their patrons in activities that highlighted these new collections. Farmer City Public Library's goal was to instill a love of reading in their youth by growing their beginning reader collection. Projects like Spring Valley CUSD 99 utilized book clubs, where students met every week to read nominees from the Rebecca Caudill 2021 Award List and other featured Illinois authors.

While most Back to Books projects aimed to promote the enjoyment of reading, many had a clear educational outcome and worked to integrate books into classroom curriculums, educational activities, and independent reading. Their goals were to either update old and outdated collections, encourage reluctant readers to read for fun, or increase reading and literacy skills. Many libraries worked directly with teachers to understand what resources were needed for assignments. Central CHSD 71 purchased books to help students research artists who created art about the Holocaust as a way of remembering and paying tribute, and an anecdotal report from the teacher stated that students were able to write about new topics that hadn't been explored in class before due to the new purchases. For reluctant or struggling readers, graphic novels were a common purchase among grantees due to their high interest level and low vocabulary level. Wilmington Community Unit School District purchased over 250 graphic novels that were disbursed to three of the district's school libraries.

Five other initiatives focused on providing library materials to homeschooled students, such as updating curricular resources, STEM resources, and take home activity kits, and building relationships with homeschooled families. For example, Beardstown Houston Memorial Library established a Homeschool Headquarters section in their library, acquired a robust assortment of education materials, and prepared a promotional ad campaign for the next school year. Herrin City Library increased their materials for homeschooled students since many students weren't attending in person classes during the pandemic, and they created book lists, advertised their collection on their webpage and social media, and created a book display to promote the collection.

Increasing the number of library resources related to diversity, equity and inclusion was another major theme of twenty-three Back to Books grants. For example, Martinsville CUSD C-3 held two "Book Tasting" events where students, teachers and paraprofessionals were exposed to different races and cultures by being introduced to new literature and authors that were divided into categories - such as eliminating stereotypes, understanding different ethnicities, and inclusion versus exclusion - which helped all new books get checked out the first week they were made available.

Improving the user's ability to access library resources remotely was another goal of Back to Books grants. With many libraries offering reduced hours and school districts providing increased remote learning, libraries and schools looked to find new alternative ways to reach their patrons and students. Twenty four projects focused on increasing their number of electronic resources by purchasing more e-books and e-audiobooks or implementing new e-book platforms.

One example was Rock Falls Township, who looked to increase the types of reading formats available for students and reluctant readers by expanding access to their digital collection and promoting reading with an incentive program for the top readers in their program.

Certain Back to Book projects placed their focus on serving patrons who had special needs. Sixteen libraries updated their large print and audiobook collections to provide alternative reading options to persons with visual impairments, mainly senior citizens. Five libraries updated their Spanish collections to address the need for more bilingual books for English language learners and reflect their community's diversity. LaSalle Public Library surveyed local Spanish-speakers for recommendations on authors and topics important to the Latino community that could be added to the collection and featured different books displays relating to these topics.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in demand from patrons for e-books that they could access without physically visiting a library. To meet this demand and encourage reading during the disruptive and stressful pandemic, the ISL distributed approximately \$500,000 in grants, all utilizing the special COVID-19 funding provided by the LSTA. Four grants were distributed to the Chicago Public Library (CPL), Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), and Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS). With these grants, the grantees purchased over 16,000 items in addition to providing additional materials through subscription services. Each grant focused on the purchase of e-books with a significant focus on youth services titles, classroom support materials, and educational items. In addition to purchasing content and maintaining subscriptions, RAILS also focused on increasing school membership in their "eRead Illinois" program by approximately one-third in the six months after the start of the pandemic, moving from approximately 150 member schools to approximately 200 schools. Membership grew a further 25% to approximately 250 member schools within a year of the pandemic.

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has achieved Goal 3. They are:

The evaluators find the following reasons to conclude that the ISL has **Achieved** Goal 3: Position the Illinois library community to further a literate Illinois by creating a culture that encourages reading. They are:

- 1) The ISL supports extensive initiatives meant to benefit print challenged individuals across the state. ISL operates the Talking Book and Braille Services (TBBS), circulating hundreds of thousands of print and electronic materials. Staff at the TBBS also interact directly with patrons to provide assistance in finding and accessing materials. The ISL also provides grants to local radio stations through the Radio Information Services initiative for those stations to record local and national newspaper articles for those who are blind or otherwise cannot read. Across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and a yearly average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content.

- 2) Through the Back to Books initiative, the ISL provides resources to support the reading needs of a variety of ages, demographics, regions, and topics across Illinois. This initiative focused on a variety of content and approaches. Many libraries focused on enhancing specific topic areas of their collections to encourage reading for information and enjoyment of all genres, including graphic novels, classic literature, multicultural books, early literacy, leadership, STEAM topics, and career exploration. Other libraries worked alongside schools to integrate books into classroom curriculums, education activities, and independent reading. The goals of many of these projects were to either update old and outdated collections, encourage reluctant readers to read for fun, and increase reading and literacy skills. This also included providing materials and services to homeschooled students. As well, there was a focus on reaching the diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic populations of Illinois. For example, Martinsville CUSD C-3 held two “Book Tasting” events where students, teacher, and paraprofessionals were exposed to different races and cultures by being introduced to new literature and authors that were divided into categories - such as eliminating stereotypes, understanding different ethnicities, and inclusion versus exclusion - which helped all new books get checked out the first week they were made available.

The evaluators conclude that ISL has **ACHIEVED** Goal 3.

A-2. To what extent did your Five-Year Plan activities achieve results that address national priorities associated with the Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

During the review period, ISL provided grants that addressed all six of the “measuring success focal areas” and their underlying intents. Most attention was given to lifelong learning and information access, followed by institutional capacity. Economic and employment development, human services, and civic engagement were addressed, but not nearly to the same extent as the first three. Many activities addressed more than one focal area or intent. It should also be noted that, when completing progress reports, projects did not always accurately record their focus and intent(s).

The ISL addressed lifelong learning through each of its three goals. Goal 1 addresses lifelong learning through the Radio Information Services project and Eastern Illinois University’s library technology expansion. Goal 2 projects such as Engaging Library Patrons, Project Next Generation, and 10-Ton Challenge address the lifelong learning goal. Through the Family Literacy Project, Goal 3 addresses lifelong learning.

The ISL addressed institutional capacity through each of its three goals. Goal 1 initiatives including the Counting Opinions, Cataloging Maintenance Center, Eastern Illinois University’s library technology expansion, and ILLINET administration online learning webinars all address institutional capacity. Through Goal 2’s Targeting Autism Forum, Cataloging Accuracy, Digitalization of Archives, Continuing Education of Library Workforce, and AdobeConnect trainings the ISL addresses institutional capacity. Under Goal 3, the TBBS addresses institutional capacity.

The ISL addresses access to information through each of its three goals. Goal 1 addresses access to information through the FirstSearch subscription, library delivery services, the WT Cox subscription, and Radio Information Services. Goal 2 addresses access to information through Project Next Generation programming. Goal 3 addresses access to information through the TBBS.

The ISL addresses economic and employment development through Goal 2 and Goal 3. Goal 2's Project Next Generation addresses this focal area. For example, the Bradley Public Library trained students on technologies used by the design and marketing industry. Sparta Public Library's Project Next Generation project focused on teaching students STEAM technologies and skills in the context of career choices and entrepreneurial opportunities. Danville Public Library's Project Next Generation: Occupational Knowledge provides students with the opportunity to explore a variety of job fields that require differing advanced education levels with hands-on experience. Through Goal 3's Back to Book initiative, The CE Brehm Memorial Public Library District purchased materials related to searching for a job to help combat the high post-COVID unemployment in the area.

The ISL addresses civic engagement through Goal 2's Project Next Generation and Goal 3's Back to Books initiatives. Under Project Next Generation, the Lincoln Library provides an example of these efforts as they worked with students to create an audio or video project to address an issue in their local community. In another Project Next Generation project, across three years of funding, Beardstown, which has a large Hispanic immigrant community, used computers, software, and copying/printing equipment to facilitate students' investigation of the history of their community and families. Through Back to Books, Nokomis CUSD#22 purchased books focused on society, equity, and the work others are doing to improve American lives.

The ISL addresses human services through Goal 3's Back to Books initiative. For example, West Frankfort Public Library purchased educational books related to parenting and homeschooling for caretakers experiencing new challenges and stressors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dongola Public Library District used Back to Book funds related to medicine and health. The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired purchased books to support their Expanded Core Curriculum including topics on orientation and mobility, human guide techniques, recognizing cues and landmarks, and social skills. Casey-Westfield CUSD #C-4 purchased books related to personal and family finances.

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)

- Library workforce (current and future)
- Individuals living below the poverty line
- Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed
- Ethnic or minority populations
- Immigrants/refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills

- Families
- Children (aged 0-5)
- School-aged youth (aged 6-17)

Out of the nine groups listed in IMLS' evaluation guidelines, one received at least 10% of total resources (federal plus state match) during the three-year review period: individuals with disabilities, which received 12% of the total funding during the review period. Universally, this funding focused on this with low-vision, blindness, and other sight-based disabilities. Discussion of these contributions occurs under Goal 3 and is not repeated in the entirety for the sake of space. The ISL supports extensive initiatives meant to benefit print-challenged individuals across the state. ISL operates the TBBS, circulating hundreds of thousands of print and electronic materials. Staff at the TBBS also interact directly with patrons to assist in finding and accessing materials. The ISL also provides grants to local radio stations through the Radio Information Services initiative for those stations to record local and national newspaper articles for those who are blind or otherwise cannot read. Across the evaluation period, the Radio Information Services averaged approximately 14,000 individuals utilizing their service a year and a yearly average of approximately 28,000 hours of original locally produced content. Further, through the Back to Books initiative, multiple libraries purchased audio and large print books for the benefit of those with visual disabilities.

An important note is that training the library workforce fell just below the 10% threshold to be included. Extensive efforts discussed elsewhere in this evaluation report demonstrate a sizeable, dedicated commitment to training and developing library staff across Illinois. ISL has done this through their "Director's University", "Elevate", "Trustee Education", The ILA annual conference, AdobeConnect trainings, and ASD-related trainings. These trainings provide Illinois library staff both topic expertise and help develop leaders at Illinois libraries across the state. Through these various initiatives, the ISL provided thousands of library staff with hundreds of hours of training.

## **Process Questions**

B-1. How have you used any data from the State Program Report (SPR) and elsewhere (e.g., Public Libraries Survey) to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan?

The data from the SPR allowed for the sorting and analysis of the activity levels and financial resources dedicated to each goal. Having the match projects included in the SPR was beneficial to have comparative data for categorizing state funded and LSTA projects as a whole. Further, Excel files that summarized the SPR reports in a coherent manner simplified and organized the data in a way that allowed for qualitative analysis and generating counts of costs and the number of specific groups targeted in projects.

B-2. Specify any modifications you made to the Five-Year Plan. What was the reason for this change?

No formal changes or amendments were made to the Plan since it was submitted. However, the COVID-19 pandemic obviously impacted library services and achieving the five-year plan. Near universally though, initiatives moved forward in modified ways to accommodate the reality of COVID-19. The only referenced initiative that did not come to fruition had to do with the Encyclopedia of Illinois. The ISL will need to determine if that is something they want to bring back in the forthcoming five-year plan.

B-3. How and with whom have you shared data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources? How have you used the last Five-Year Evaluation to inform data collected for the new Five-Year Evaluation? How have you used this information throughout this five-year cycle?

Cumulative data is shared on the State Library's website and during meetings with stakeholders. The list of the top projects funded annually is posted on the ISL website to show the use of grant funds. The intent is to add documents to the LSTA website starting with the current year to document how funds were used under each goal and for which target audiences. The data collection methods for this evaluation mirrored the previous five-year evaluation to allow for reasonable comparisons over time, where possible.

## **Methodology Questions**

C-1. Identify how you implemented an independent Five-Year Evaluation using the criteria described in the section of this guidance document called Selection of an Independent Evaluator.

As with prior years, the evaluation was carried out by the Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield. The staff involved included a Ph.D. with extensive experience in public program evaluation and a clinical assistant professor of Library Instructional Services at UIS.

C-2. Describe the types of statistical and qualitative methods (including administrative records) used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation. Assess their validity and reliability.

The evaluation has relied exclusively on qualitative methods owing to data limitations that preclude the use of more rigorous quantitative methods. Data were drawn from grantee project reports and additional documents, which were frequently rich in descriptive detail and inconsistent in their use of quantitative data and measurement of outcomes. Some grantees provided no numerical evidence on the effects of their efforts. Many others did provide this evidence but not in a consistent enough way to afford comparisons across grantees. Also, although all project reports indicated the goals and intents projects were based on, the data collected was often not aligned sufficiently with these specific aims to permit a quantitative assessment of the extent to which they were achieved. Consequently, the evaluation turned to qualitative methods. Using qualitative methods, all grants were analyzed using SPR reports with a focus on understanding what grantees did with the funding and measures they provided to capture the impact of the grant on targeted outcomes. In the current evaluation, credibility has been pursued by sticking as close as possible to what grantees themselves reported when it came to their progress, though differences in such reporting understandably resulted in imperfect measures when attempting to holistically understand the results produced by funding. Where



necessary for the purposes of clarification or additional information, the evaluators communicated directly with ISL staff, with which information produced from those exchanges were included in the report as well.

C-3. Describe the stakeholders involved in the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation. How did you engage them?

In line with previous iterations of the evaluation, the report has been based on annual reports submitted by the recipients of all grants and contracts issued during the review period. All of these reports followed a common format. During the time in which grants and contracts were in place, ISL encouraged projects to provide feedback on success and challenges through quarterly reporting. In addition to these direct and detailed reports, the evaluators communicated with ISL staff on any questions they had and included those discussions in the report.

C-4. Discuss how you will share the key findings and recommendations with others.

The evaluation report will be shared with the ISL Advisory Committee at its regularly scheduled meeting later in 2022. The Committee advises ISL in the development of state and federal library plans; provides input in addressing policies, issues, and activities for library development and cooperation among different types of libraries; makes recommendations concerning the evaluation of statewide services; and addresses the use of technology to expand access to information for Illinois citizens. Additionally, at meetings with other stakeholders, the State Library Director's report will include the results of this latest LSTA evaluation. The final evaluation document will be posted on the ISL Library Services and Technology Act web page. Key findings and recommendations with a link to the full evaluation will be announced in the State Library's electronic newsletter, E-News. Also, the report will be shared with all of the members of Illinois' Congressional delegation.

## **Appendix A: Acronyms**

ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder

CARLI - Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

CMC – Cataloging Maintenance Center

CPL - Chicago Public Library

FY – Fiscal Year

IDA – Illinois Digital Archives

IHLS – Illinois Heartland Library System

ILA – Illinois Library Association

ILDS – Illinois Library Delivery Service

IMLS – Institute of Museum and Library Services

IPLAR – Illinois Public Library Annual Report

ISL – Illinois State Library

L2 – Learning Library

LSTA – Library Services and Technology Act

OCLC – Online Computer Library Center

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

RAILS – Reaching Across Illinois Library System

RIS – Radio Information Services

SPR – State Program Report

STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

TBBS – Talking Book and Braille Services

## **Appendix B: Bibliography of Documents Reviewed**

Illinois State Library - Long Range Plan for the Use of Library Services and Technology Act Funds 2018 – 2022

Illinois State Library – Staff training attendance numbers

Illinois Secretary of State – Illinois Public Library Annual Report 2018, 2019, 2020

Institute of Museum and Library Services - Guidelines for IMLS Grants to States Five-Year Evaluation

Institute of Museum and Library Services LSTA Grants to States State Program Reports Illinois FY2017 (for context and longitudinal purposes), Illinois FY2018, Illinois FY2019, and Illinois FY2020

Racine, David - Evaluation of Use of Illinois State Library (ISL) Library Services & Technology Act Funds FY 2013 - FY 2017

## Appendix C: Special projects funded through the CARES Act

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding was provided from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the Illinois State Library to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, including to expand digital network access, purchase internet accessible devices, and provide technical support services.<sup>4</sup>

### Providing resources for access to information and ideas

The COVID-19 pandemic and the shift accompanying a sizeable increase in remote schooling and remote work necessitated libraries to assist in meeting the needs of their local communities. With 69 of the 80 grants that did not remain with the ISL, the ISL distributed them to local libraries as part of Goal 1. Libraries utilized CARES Act funds to meet this goal under a broad title of “digital network access.” These “digital network access” grants ranged from \$658 to \$10,000. The total cost of these grants was \$458,026.53. While the exact number of people who used these expanded Wi-Fi services is unknown, the potential reach of these grants is an estimated approximate 4,021,710 people<sup>5</sup>. Further, it is likely that those who did utilize such services did so multiple times, given the regular increased demand for accessible Wi-Fi for remote schooling and work during the pandemic. In total, this points to a sizeable impact on the access to information and ideas for the communities these libraries serve. These “digital network access” grants benefited a wide range of communities and groups. Across types of communities, six grantees serviced urban communities, 38 serviced suburban communities and 28 serviced rural communities, demonstrating a diverse geographic contribution. The total is greater as some libraries reported servicing more than one type of community with the grant.

- The Litchfield Public Library increased their Wi-Fi capabilities and became the official Wi-Fi hotspot provider for their town. They increased the range of their Wi-Fi, allowing residents to have access to Internet where they may not at home, as nearly one-third of households in Litchfield do not have access to the Internet.
- The Belleville Public Library equipped two cars with wireless Internet routers, partnering with the local school district to identify where to position the vehicles to maximize their benefit to students trying to complete their course work.
- The Kewanee Public Library District expanded the quality and range of their Wi-Fi capabilities with a reported impact of 5,000 users gaining Internet access through this expansion.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/grants/digital-network-grant.html#:~:text=CARES%20Act%20funding%20was%20provided,and%20provide%20technical%20support%20services.>

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://librarytechnology.org/libraries/>  
Several examples highlight the important contribution of this program for the local communities

- The Mount Morris Public Library expanded the quality and range of their Wi-Fi capabilities with a reported impact of moving from approximately 75 individual users a month before the upgrades to approximately 1,500 individual users a month after the upgrades.
- United CUSD #304 used a grant to expand access to school library resources beyond those only on the school's internet network. In the semester prior to this upgrade, students checked out 2,500 items. In the semester after this upgrade, students checked out 7,500 items.

#### Ensuring safe access to ideas and information during the pandemic

Another one of the seven grants that remained with the ISL also funded by the CARES Act allowed the ISL to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for Illinois public library staff and patrons. This allowed Illinois public libraries to safely remain open and provide the public access to library resources during the pandemic. With these funds, the ISL made it possible for public library agencies to apply for up to \$500 per eligible public library building to address the proper handling of library materials and to purchase PPE to ensure the safety of staff and patrons. The list of items that libraries could purchase included hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, disposable and/or reusable face masks, face shields, disinfectant spray and/or wipes, acrylic shields or dividers, soap, soap dispensers, UV sanitizing lights and chargers, and other supplies and materials that supported safe, clean library environments. The ISL distributed funding to 218 public libraries from all across the state of Illinois for these purposes. Funds for the PPE totaled \$155,299.90, all of which came from CARES Act funds.