

# REPORTER

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Blind Date  
with a  
Book

# *The Illinois Library Association Reporter*

is a forum for those who are improving and reinventing Illinois libraries, with articles that seek to: explore new ideas and practices from all types of libraries and library systems; examine the challenges facing the profession; and inform the library community and its supporters with news and comment about important issues. The *ILA Reporter* is produced and circulated with the purpose of enhancing and supporting the value of libraries, which provide free and equal access to information. This access is essential for an open democratic society, an informed electorate, and the advancement of knowledge for all people.



## ON THE COVER

It's time to freshen up your reader's advisory for spring with some new takes from librarians around the state. Hosting a blind date with a book, book genies, speed dating, and book spine poetry are among the ideas shared in the article that begins on page 16. Cover photography by Dennis Pryber, Verso Design Corp.

The Illinois Library Association is the voice for Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. It provides leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services in Illinois and for the library community in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. It is the eighth oldest library association in the world and the third largest state association in the United States, with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. Its 3,200 members are primarily librarians and library staff, but also trustees, publishers, and other supporters.

The Illinois Library Association has four full-time staff members. It is governed by a sixteen-member executive board, made up of elected officers. The association employs the services of Strategic Advocacy Group for legislative advocacy. ILA is a 501(c) (3) charitable and educational organization.

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See ILA calendar for submission deadlines for the *ILA Reporter*. Copy should be submitted by e-mail to [ila@ila.org](mailto:ila@ila.org). You are encouraged to include digital or film photos (black/white or color) and graphics (on disk or camera-ready) with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.



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# The Whole Story, the Whole Library: Storytelling as a Driving Force

I have been teaching storytelling at the graduate level in a variety of settings since the 1980s; currently I teach storytelling at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University in River Forest. One of my former storytelling students returned from a library conference where a well-known presenter stated emphatically that librarians did not tell stories in the library tradition anymore, they only did preschool storytimes and other book-related programs for very young children. This statement came as a surprise to my students, who were engaged in learning how to tell stories to audiences of all ages, and who were attending and observing a wide variety of storytelling events at libraries and other venues in the area. The class wrote a note to the presenter (admittedly it was a little huffy, but they wrote it, not me) and insisted on sending it. E-mail addresses of public figures and professional presenters being relatively easy to find, the message went out immediately. The presenter, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not respond. It isn't easy to admit that you may be wrong.

## BEING WRONG

The discovery of storytelling by contemporary young professionals has resulted in an explosion of events in bars, restaurants, and other adult venues across the United States. On any given evening, in Chicago alone, it is possible to find multiple storytelling performances and open mics featuring amateur tellers telling autobiographical tales, often with a specific theme and/or time limit. Moth-style storytelling events have spread across the United States, both face-to-face and online, and the personal story reigns supreme.

The leaders of this welcome rediscovery of storytelling by and for adults are often unaware of the long history of storytelling in the wider world, in the United States, in Illinois, and in

libraries. They see storytelling as uncharted territory for self-expression and entertainment, and have an irrepressible energy that is both heartening in its enthusiasm and troubling in its lack of context. I admit to initially being remarkably irritated by the unintentional co-opting of a practice so long a part of the library and freelance storytelling professions. I was wrong.

As a long-time librarian, teacher, writer, storyteller, and workshop leader focused on storytelling at libraries, festivals, and other events, I find the energy at these new storytelling venues both contagious and heartening. The discussion of storytelling as a newly emerging art may be lacking in context, but the tangible energy present at these events is reminiscent of the late twentieth-century storytelling revival, which was fueled by accomplished professional storytellers in festival and library performances, and enthusiastically supported by librarians. The new popularity of this traditional form is indicative not only of the human need to connect, but the human need for story. Youth services librarians have long spoken of the efficacy of storytelling; it's past time for librarians as a whole to do the same.

## STORYTELLING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: AN INCREDIBLY BRIEF HISTORY

The tradition of oral storytelling in public libraries in the United States is easily more than a century old. In the early twentieth-century years of library services to children, storytelling was considered an effective means of connecting school-age children to literature and libraries, since listeners of all ages respond positively to oral stories. Library storytelling programs revolved around world folktales and accepted classics in children's literature, and such programs helped librarians connect children to their own and other cultures, and ease



immigrant children into the American mainstream by connecting them to the public library, a uniquely American institution. (Jackson, 26; Rollock, 6).

In addition to connecting children with books, children's librarians were determined to connect them to one another, to the cultures of their peers, and to libraries through active oral storytelling (Moore, "Story"; Olcott, *Rational*). The training centers for youth services librarians in the early twentieth century included the School of Library Science at Pratt Institute in New York and the Carnegie Library Training School for Children's Librarians in Pittsburgh. Both curriculums included storytelling as part of the youth services librarians' professional skills: Frances Jenkins Olcott, director of children's work at the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh and later head of the Carnegie Library Training School, formally incorporated storytelling into her program plan in 1899 (Pellowski, *World of Storytelling*, 97); Anne Carroll Moore, head of youth services at the New York Public Library, created a position for librarian-storyteller Anna Cogswell Tyler as first Supervisor of Storytelling for the New York Public Library system (Baker, *Storytelling*, 7). Librarians trained at these two centers took their knowledge of storytelling with them to professional positions across the United States (Baker, *Storytelling*, 3), and by 1927 there were storytelling programs in 79 percent of the public libraries in the United States, along with storytelling outreach services to park districts, schools, hospitals, and other institutions (Alvey, *Historical*, 44).

[continued on page 6]

"People are not convinced by statistics and factoids; they are convinced by the stories that emotionally move them. The ability to tell an organization's story effectively is what moves a community from apathy to advocacy."



## PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY: LIBRARY STORYTELLING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Today storytelling is taught in graduate schools of library and information science across the country. The benefit of such training is multifold: students not only learn how to identify appropriate stories for a wide variety of developmental stages, they also learn how to most effectively communicate their stories to their listeners. This last is a crucial skill in today's library environment. The ability to tell the story of the library's mission in its community is radically important to the development of grassroots support for library services.

Storytelling in its most essential manifestation is at the core of many library programs and lends itself to a dizzying array of effective programming opportunities: young adult storytelling programs include active participation by teens in the telling; local history programs collect community stories from seniors; movie programs for adults capitalize on the modern fascination with fairy tales and contemporary media. Storytelling not only creates community from a group of disparate participants, it also acts as a unifying focus—for family programming, for content development in outreach to schools and other community agencies, and for promoting inclusivity in programming for any age audience, from preschoolers to senior citizens. Every program or event presented in the library, whether executed by librarians or outside presenters, should promote not only the resources of the library but also a positive perception of the agency. A unified philosophy of programming centered on storytelling focuses library efforts in an area that has proven to be effective over time and technological change.

Storytelling is a stealth activity that often moves into professional arenas unrecognized. Most people have a very limited idea of what storytelling actually is, and how it can be effectively utilized not only in programming, but also in management and advocacy. Recent research in neuroscience supports what librarian storytellers have known for decades: human beings are hard-wired for story, and respond to it at a visceral level. Listening to oral stories has been closely connected to the acquisition of literacy skills, the expansion of vocabulary, and the development of active listening skills, but storytelling has also been identified as the single most effective means of persuasion. People are not convinced by statistics and factoids; they are convinced by the stories that emotionally move them. The ability to tell an organization's story effectively is what moves a community from apathy to advocacy.

Today's libraries balance on the precarious line between traditional services and technological change. Storytelling, sometimes considered quaint and old-fashioned, bridges the seemingly infinite space between the recent past and the onrushing future. In all its permutations, from digital recordings to preschool story times to annual reports, storytelling can be integrated not only into library programming but also into management, training, and marketing. This cohesive approach allows libraries to offer a consistent, unified vision to their staff and their communities, from programming to outreach to advocacy. Storytelling as the driving philosophy behind library service can serve as a community creator and a focal point for activism. We are long past the moment for taking advantage of the possibilities inherent in a technique that is such a proven success. ■

Share your story!



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## NOTES

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Moore, Anne Carroll. "Story Hour." *Library Journal* 30.4 (1905): 211.

Olcott, Frances Jenkins. *Rational Library Work with Children and the Preparation for It*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Lib., 1910.

Pellowski, Anne. *The World of Storytelling*. Expanded and rev. ed. Bronx, NY: Wilson, 1990.

Rollock, Barbara. *Public Library Services for Children*. Hamden, CT: Library Professional Publications, 1988.

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## A SHORT LIST OF RESOURCES

Capturing Stories, Capturing Lives: An Introduction to Digital Storytelling  
[jakesonline.org/dst\\_techforum.pdf](http://jakesonline.org/dst_techforum.pdf)

Del Negro, Janice M. *Folktales Aloud! Practical Advice for Playful Storytelling*. ALA, 2014.

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom  
[edtechteacher.org/tools/multimedia/digital-storytelling/](http://edtechteacher.org/tools/multimedia/digital-storytelling/)

Digital Storytelling: What Is Digital Storytelling?  
[guides.library.stonybrook.edu/digital-storytelling](http://guides.library.stonybrook.edu/digital-storytelling)

Ellis, Elizabeth. *From Plot to Narrative*. Parkhurst Brothers, 2012.

Marek, Kate. *Organizational Storytelling for Librarians: Using Stories for Effective Leadership*. ALA, 2011.

Norfolk, Bobby, and Sherry Norfolk. *The Moral of the Story: Folktales for Character Development*. August House, 1999.

Sima, Judy, and Kevin Cordi. *Raising Voices: Creating Youth Storytelling Groups and Troupes*. Libraries Unlimited, 2003.

Simmons, Annette. *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins: How to Use Your Own Stories to Communicate with Power and Impact*. Amacom, 2007.

Stenson, Jane, ed. *Social Studies in the Storytelling Classroom: Exploring Our Cultural Voices and Perspectives*. Parkhurst, 2012.

Storytelling and the Common Core  
[yesalliance.org/resources/storytelling-and-the-common-core-standards](http://yesalliance.org/resources/storytelling-and-the-common-core-standards)

Storytelling, Folktales and the Comic Book Format  
[scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=slis\\_pub](http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=slis_pub)

# Creating a Folklore of Our Own: A Conversation with Storyteller Beth Horner

## **How did you develop your skills early on as a newbie teller?**

... listening to other storytellers and studying with other storytellers. When I started out, I spent a great deal of time traveling to study and listen to other storytellers. I would drive to Tennessee where they would have weekend workshops. All of my vacation, all of my time off, was spent going to work with other storytellers and listen to other storytellers. Now we are so lucky that storytelling has cropped up all over the country... so that one doesn't have to travel very far, particularly in Chicago. We are blessed with an amazing storytelling community.

## **Speaking of Chicago, what do you think so far about this current wave of storytelling that has really exploded here over the last several years?**

I think it's very exciting... because people are coming to it from so many different walks of life, and because a lot of the people telling are youthful, as in under fifty years old. When I started out, we were all youthful; we were all under fifty years old. Well, we're getting a little bit older now, and our life experiences are changing. We're having different kinds of life experiences than we did have, and that makes for incredible stories, but it's a different kind of a story. So to have this sort of infusion now of youth again is fun, and it's important for the youthful stories of this generation to be told.

## **Chicago is happily swarming with new storytellers, and a great deal of them seem to be really nervous about memorizing and delivering every word just right. Any thoughts on this?**

Veteran storyteller Carol Birch from Connecticut is fond of explaining it this way: The specific words of a story are like the path through the world of the story. It is important to know the whole world of the story and not to concentrate solely on the specific words, the path. If you only know the path and you fall OFF the path (i.e., forget the words and freeze up), you will fall into oblivion. If you know the whole world of the story—all that is under, over, and around the story—and you fall off the path, you will fall into the story's world, wander around a bit, and then easily get back onto the path.

## **Is there a practical way to approach story preparation in this manner?**

In creating my stories, I don't work via "the page." I work orally, making scribbles, notes, possible outlines and charts, and endless recordings—concentrating on character, scene, structure, and most important, on image. I try telling the story out loud over and over and over to myself and to trusted colleagues. With each telling, specific words and phrases emerge and I note them so that I can then incorporate them into the next telling.





**So the problem is not in the material being difficult to hear or tell, but in the crafting of it.**

That's exactly it. And getting enough space from it, being able to step far enough from it that one could make the story so that anyone could hook in.

**I have heard you tell some traditional stories as well as the personal narratives that are a hallmark of this current movement in storytelling. Is there any common ground between these worlds?**


My work is built on a very strong foundation of traditional, mythological, and literary stories. For the first ten years of my career, I told only folktales, myths, and literary works.... If you look at these longtime storytellers, you can see that they really understand structure. If a story has existed for hundreds of years, in the oral tradition, you know that story is well structured and has characters and images that people can hang onto. A lot of folktales have been cleaned up and Disney-fied. Don't even get me started on that. But if you go back to the old folktales, those are meaty stories. And you just know that those original stories are universal.

**Early on, I was ignorant, often saying that folktales weren't a part of what I do, but I wised up after talking to some veteran tellers. These stories are definitely relevant today.**

You wouldn't believe how much. I have a colleague who did a whole show on cross-dressing and transgender in old folktales.

**I hope that the current movement of storytelling will eventually embrace folklore rather than keep it at arm's length.**

What you are doing, what I am doing, what any of the new wave in Chicago is doing, is creating a folklore of its own. I call folktales the personal narrative of an entire culture.

*Excerpted with permission from the Chicago Artists Resource, January 6, 2015. [www.chicagoartistsresource.org](http://www.chicagoartistsresource.org) *

# Visualizing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Images and Interpretation

*"Just close your eyes and picture Tom. Do you see an aged character passively learning how to read at the behest of Little Eva? Or do you see a much younger Tom teaching himself to read from the one book he owns (and relies on), the Bible, instituting a self-help reading club of two with Eva, and learning from it how to stand up against slave masters? Which one of these is Stowe's Tom? Or should you be saying "Uncle Tom," even though he is less often called this in the book? And what happens when you do say "Uncle Tom"?" — R. J. Ellis*

The queries in the quotation above introduce the exhibit currently on display in the Special Collections gallery in the University of Illinois at Chicago's Richard J. Daley library. Curated by R. J. Ellis, professor of American Studies at Birmingham University, UK, the exhibit challenges our visual impressions of one of the most influential and controversial novels in American history. These images, Professor Ellis argues, have shaped perceptions of Stowe's book since its publication and twisted her powerful anti-slavery novel into a vehicle of racism and stereotyping.

Although it is widely credited as the most significant anti-slavery novel ever written, the novel is more often criticized for its stereotypes than praised for its text. In fact, most of us could describe the stereotype of "Uncle Tom," even if we've never read the book. So how did this novel that inspired an outpouring of intense antislavery sentiment become viewed as a racist embarrassment and its central character become a symbol for excessive submission and obsequiousness?

[continued on page 12]

*"Tracing their evolution can help us to understand the complex creation of stereotypes and their role in the institutionalization of racism."*



Cover design for a children's edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, edited and slightly abridged by C. H. Irwin. London: "The Boy's Own Paper" Office, n.d. [ca. 1930].



# UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



YOUNG  
FOLKS'  
EDITION

M. A. DONOHUE & CO.  
CHICAGO

An elderly Uncle Tom reads the *Bible* with Eva in this cover design. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Young Folk's Edition*. Chicago: M. A. Donohue, 1905.



## THE POWER OF PICTURES

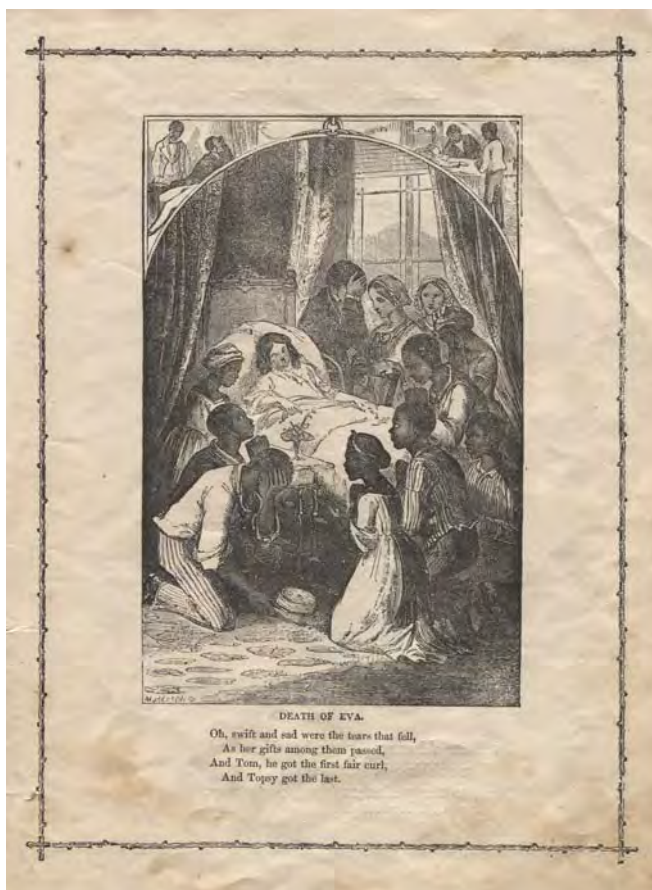
Ellis's exhibit argues that much of how we think and feel about the novel is shaped by visual representations created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ellis draws on his personal collection of hundreds of images to reveal the way these stereotypes came to overshadow the text itself. Sensitive to their disturbing nature, Ellis argues that we should not turn away. Tracing their evolution can help us to understand the complex creation of stereotypes and their role in the institutionalization of racism.

The dramatic narrative of the novel lent itself well to illustrations. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written in reaction to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, was first serialized in the abolitionist paper *The National Era* before its publication in book form. Centering her story on the heartbreaking separation of African American families under slavery, Stowe advanced a Christian moral suasionist argument for abolition. Enormously successful, more than one million people read her novel by the time the 13th Amendment abolished slavery. Stowe's novel was reissued and reprinted in a multitude of editions and gave impetus to a media industry of stage productions, memorabilia, and ephemera.

Early illustrators referred to an emerging anti-slavery iconography to inspire their work, such as that of a supplicating slave reproduced by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787. This image of a kneeling slave inspired countless variations, few of them related to the Christian message intended by the original. The exhibit begins by exposing us to these early visual precursors to the novel. Included is Hammatt Billings's masthead design for the abolitionist paper *The Liberator*, which he based on Wedgwood's kneeling slave. Billings illustrated the first edition of Stowe's book and his engravings influenced images and themes that would recur again and again through various editions.

The exhibit also includes examples from early British pirated editions, which sensationalized the dramatic action of the book, such as Eliza's crossing of the Ohio River, or created crude stereotypes through caricature, as in George Cruikshank's influential illustrations. These too became models for other illustrators. Illustrations in reprints of the novel reflected the commercial goals of the publishers, depicting auctions of half-clothed women and sadistic whippings and beatings for a titillated Victorian public. More alarmingly, portrayals of Stowe's characters reinforced continuing racism and segregation in the U.S.

[continued on page 14]



Kneeling slaves surround an angelic Eva. "Death of Eva." *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Pictures and Stories*. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853, p. 27.



George Cruikshank created many early iconic images. "The young girl mounted the block." *Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Tale of Life Among the Lowly*. London: Hutchinson and Co., n.d. [ca. 1910], facing p. 248.





Illustrations of Eliza fleeing across the ice appeared in almost every edition.  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Hurst & Company, n.d. [ca. 1915], facing p. 58.



## EVOLVING PORTRAIT OF TOM

In early children's editions, a young Tom holds Eva's hand while they read the Bible. Later editions distance the two. Eva is portrayed as teaching Tom to read rather than learning with him, thereby corrupting Stowe's message of equality. Stowe's text described Tom as young and powerful. Yet Tom was increasingly drawn as a gray-haired, stooped, and elderly man.

Tom's strength, Ellis argues, was in the passive resistance he exhibits at the end of the book. Portraying Tom as elderly, Ellis notes, changed his refusal to betray the whereabouts of the slaves Cassey and Emmeline into an act of inevitable feebleness rather than a conscious choice of passive resistance based on Christian principles. Some children's versions even altered the storyline to allow Tom to live and return home to his cabin, totally eliminating Tom's sacrifice. Tom's metamorphosis into a subservient and ingratiating elderly man is symbolized by images of Eva hanging a floral wreath around Tom's neck, an image evoking bondage and submission.

Perceptions of the novel were also influenced by anti-Tom literature created to counteract the book's message, particularly in the South. The exhibit includes illustrations portraying the happiness of plantation life and of slaves' efforts to remain in the comforts of captivity. Although bearing no relation to Stowe's text, these images were common enough to become associated with the perception of her book.

Some of the most disturbing stereotypes emerged onstage and are represented by the playbills and theater programs included in the exhibit. The success of the novel produced a flood of stage productions, sheet music, recordings, and film. More people probably saw *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on stage than read the book. Dramatic productions sensationalized and sentimentalized the story and strove for comic effect through exaggeration. With few intellectual property protections in place, adaptations ranged far from Stowe's original plot. "Tom Shows" created minstrel characters and even introduced new ones, like Gumption Cute, a northern carpetbagger. They exaggerated the antics of Topsy and stereotyped her character as sexually provocative or grossly repellent. The original anti-slavery message of the book was almost entirely swamped by the negative portrayals in these productions.



Eva and a young Tom holding hands in this early illustration by Hammatt Billings. "Little Eva Reading the Bible to Uncle Tom in the Arbor." *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Vol. 2. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852.



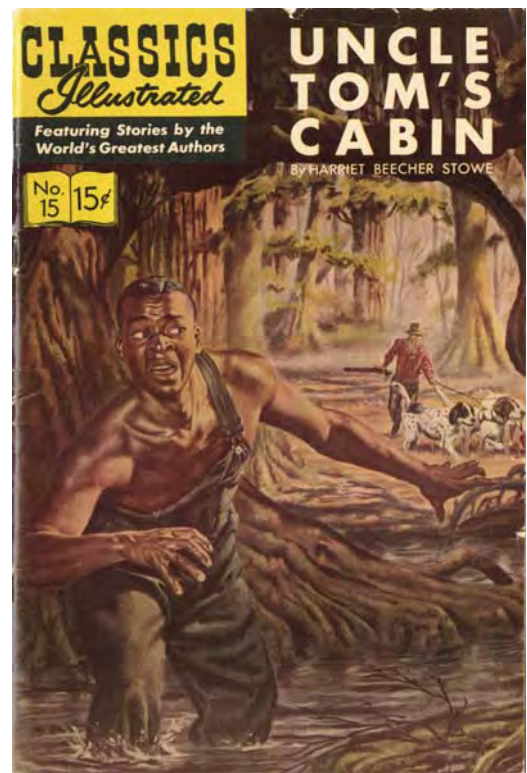
## TWISTING THE TEXT

Although Stowe appears to have had no role in any of the illustrations for her work, Ellis finds her somewhat complicit in the misrepresentation of her text. Seeking a broad appeal to her anti-slavery argument, Stowe created a conflicted text and characters that left room for stereotyping. The exhibit's section on "Whiteness" emphasizes this point. One of the troubling refrains to emerge from the text is the equation of lighter skin with more active resistance to slavery. While Stowe may have emphasized the whiteness of certain characters' skin to make brutal scenes even more shocking to white audiences, the disturbing equation of whiteness with resistance was reinforced by illustrators and perpetuated notions of black submissiveness. However, Stowe's complicity, Ellis insists, pales before the harm done by illustrators and promoters.

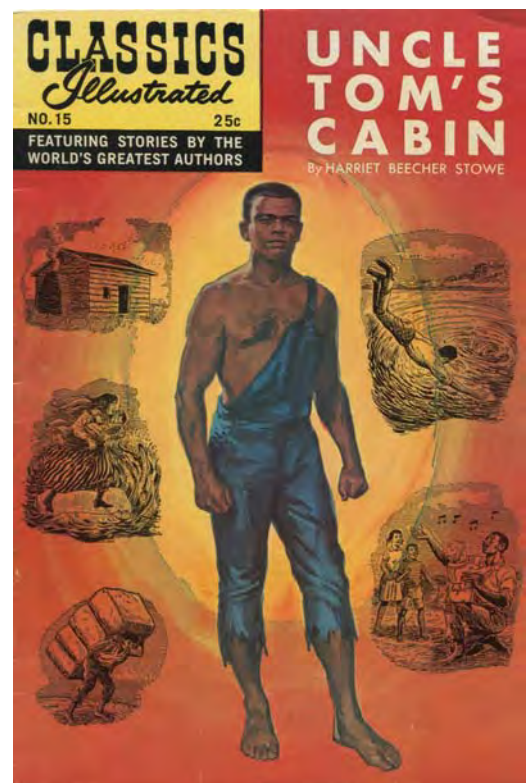
The ties between text and images are strong. Many of us learn to read by looking at pictures to follow along with a story, and educators generally agree that the use of images can enhance student recall and comprehension of material. In fact, the power of images is so strong that it can be almost impossible to divorce some illustrations from our perceptions of the character they depict. Think of Lewis Carroll's Alice and an immediate picture comes to mind. Try to picture Sherlock Holmes, or 007, or even the Hobbit without imagining an illustration in a book or a portrayal on screen. But our absorption of images is often unconscious and uncritical. Even Stowe acknowledged this when she wrote, "There is no arguing with pictures, and anybody is impressed by them, whether they mean it or not."<sup>1</sup> An examination of the history of visual imagery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reveals not only its role in changing our perception of the message of the text but more generally our need to learn to read and analyze the images we consume. In today's world of movies, graphic novels, video games, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, recognizing the influential power of images is crucial.

*"Visualizing Uncle Tom: Pictorial Interpretations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin" is on display until May 30, 2015. Special Collections & University Archives, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago, 801 S. Morgan St., Chicago, IL; 312-996-2742. IIA*

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Letter to Gamaliel Bailey," 9 March 1851, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*, [utc.iath.virginia.edu/](http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/), Accessed 12 February 2015.



The dramatic hunt for Scipio was featured on the cover of this comic book edition. *Uncle Tom's Cabin. Classics Illustrated* no. 15, 1943, rpt., with new cover design, 1964.



In the late 1960s, the cover changed to a young, strong image of Tom. *Uncle Tom's Cabin. Classics Illustrated*, no. 15. Rpt. 1969.

# READfresh, READuce, READuse, READcycle: Reader's Advisory Spring Cleaning

**S**pring cleaning typically refers to reorganizing our physical spaces after the long winter, but consider an annual cleanup of your reader services and programming. Before the chaos of summer reading and programming begins, now is a good time to evaluate and refresh those stagnant, staid ideas with something new. This doesn't mean you have to reinvent the wheel. Recycle those ideas you've heard at conference and haven't had time to implement, or test out an idea you have considered but haven't tried. Here's a start to get those wheels turning...

## LET'S GET TOGETHER

**Community Book Review — St. Paul Public Library (MN)**  
Encourage your colleagues to jot down their thoughts on a book and then display those reviews to help other library staff find new reads.

**National Readathon Day — Stickney-Forest View Public Library District**  
Sponsored by the National Book Foundation and Penguin Random House, the first-ever National Readathon Day took place in January and encouraged making #timetoread. Readers across America committed to reading for four straight hours in their own home or at the library. It's not too early to think about putting this on your calendar for next year, and to start thinking about ways to make it warm and cozy... comfy seating in a quiet nook, a portable fireplace to keep off the winter chill, warm beverages, seasonal reading suggestions. It can be as low key or elaborate as you make it. Make sure to participate in next year's National Readathon Day on January 16, 2016.

## NOT YOUR AVERAGE DISPLAY

**Blind Date with a Book — Mt. Zion District Library**  
This library wraps fiction, large print, and nonfiction books in brown paper salvaged from book orders. A label that contains the barcode, genre, and a brief synopsis is adhered to each wrapped book. A review sheet is enclosed for the recipient to "rate their date." If the rating is completed and returned to the library, the reader is entered into a drawing to win a prize. This promotion not only boosted circulation but has also helped readers discover new authors.

**Popular Reading for Students — Eastern Illinois University Booth Library**  
Recreational reading displays are not something you would always see in an academic setting, but Booth Library has had great success with books flying off their displays. Popular themes include baking, novels set in the 1960s, and war stories. To accompany the display, a card with QR code or URL directs readers to the online reading list.

[continued on page 18]







### Poetry Made from Book Spines — Aurora University

Taking a cue from the magnetic poetry idea, this takes things to a new level: create poems by utilizing book spines in which titles are arranged in such a way to create a poem. Even better, pull books from your stacks, let your patrons or students have at it by creating their own poetry, and then share photos of the poetry displays online. Check out which books were used to create this poem in the example below:

#### *“Let’s Talk Terror”*

by Sara Gerend (Assistant Professor of English)

*Nightmare*

*Snakes that Squeeze and Snatch*

*Shadows on the Grass*

*Demi-Devils*

*Square Dancing*

*Vampire Bats*

*Hunting*

*A Light in the Attic*

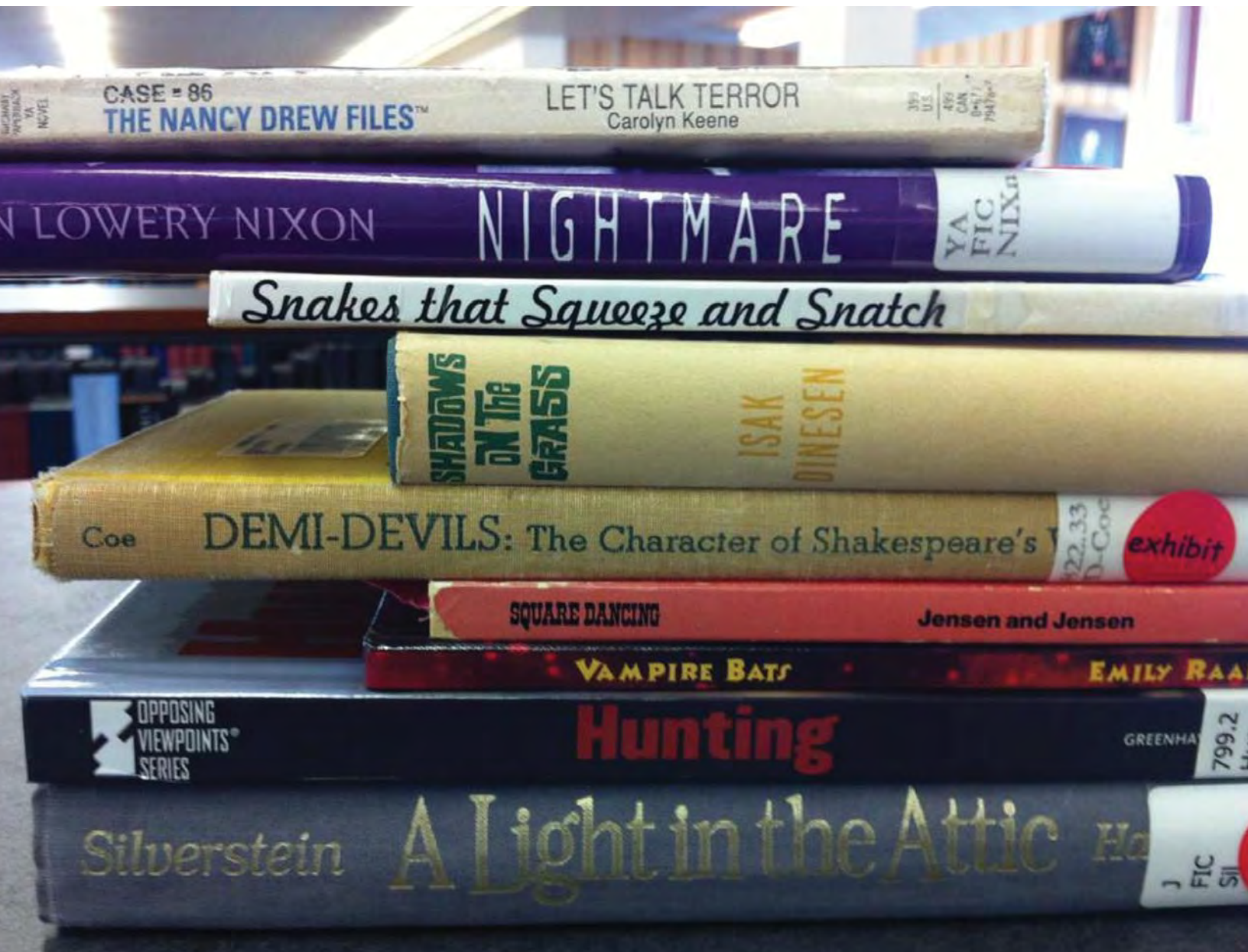
### NEW TWISTS ON OLD FAVORITES

#### Book Genie — Downers Grove Public Library

Take an interactive approach that gives instant reading suggestions to patrons of all ages with Book Genie. Patrons select book covers representing genres or subjects that they would like to read. At the end, their wish is granted with four to five suggestions. [www.downersgrovelibrary.org/genie](http://www.downersgrovelibrary.org/genie)

#### You “Mustache” Us What to Read Next — Homewood Public Library

Capitalizing on the popularity of all things mustache, this library has created a catchy title to publicize their personalized reading suggestions form where patrons can share details about their reading interests and then receive a response with personalized reading recommendations. [www.homewoodlibrary.org/web-forms/personalized-reading-list](http://www.homewoodlibrary.org/web-forms/personalized-reading-list)



## STEP UP YOUR PROGRAMMING GAME

### **Discussion Party — Elmhurst Public Library**

Host an annual party for all local book discussion groups, including both those held at the library and others held out in the community. The discussion party is held at a local reception venue where they offer finger foods, coffee, and wine (for purchase). They also give away prizes, provide literary trivia questionnaires, and set up displays of good book discussion selections.

### **Facebook Virtual Book Discussion — Aurora University Phillips Library**

Unlike a traditional book club that requires folks to read and discuss a specific book, this one posts questions about reading habits and interests to spark conversation. For a month, they posed questions such as which literary character would you love to meet, what time of day do you prefer to read, and what novel would you like to see made (or remade) into a movie. More than five hundred comments were posted to their Facebook page in response to these dialogue starters!

### **Keep Calm and Read On — Plainfield Public Library District**

Welcome a publisher representative to buzz about forthcoming books and give your readers the inside scoop on upcoming titles. The library hosted a publisher representative who presented their upcoming lineup for that season and gave every attendee a free advance reading copy, book catalog, and a tote bag. This program draws a huge crowd with little staff involvement or cost.

### **Read Down Your Library Fines — St. Paul Public Library (MN)**

Invite patrons to check in with the reference or readers advisory staff and then encourage them to read in the library. For every fifteen minutes read, the library will take one dollar off their fines.

### **Speed Dating with Books — St. Paul Public Library (MN)**

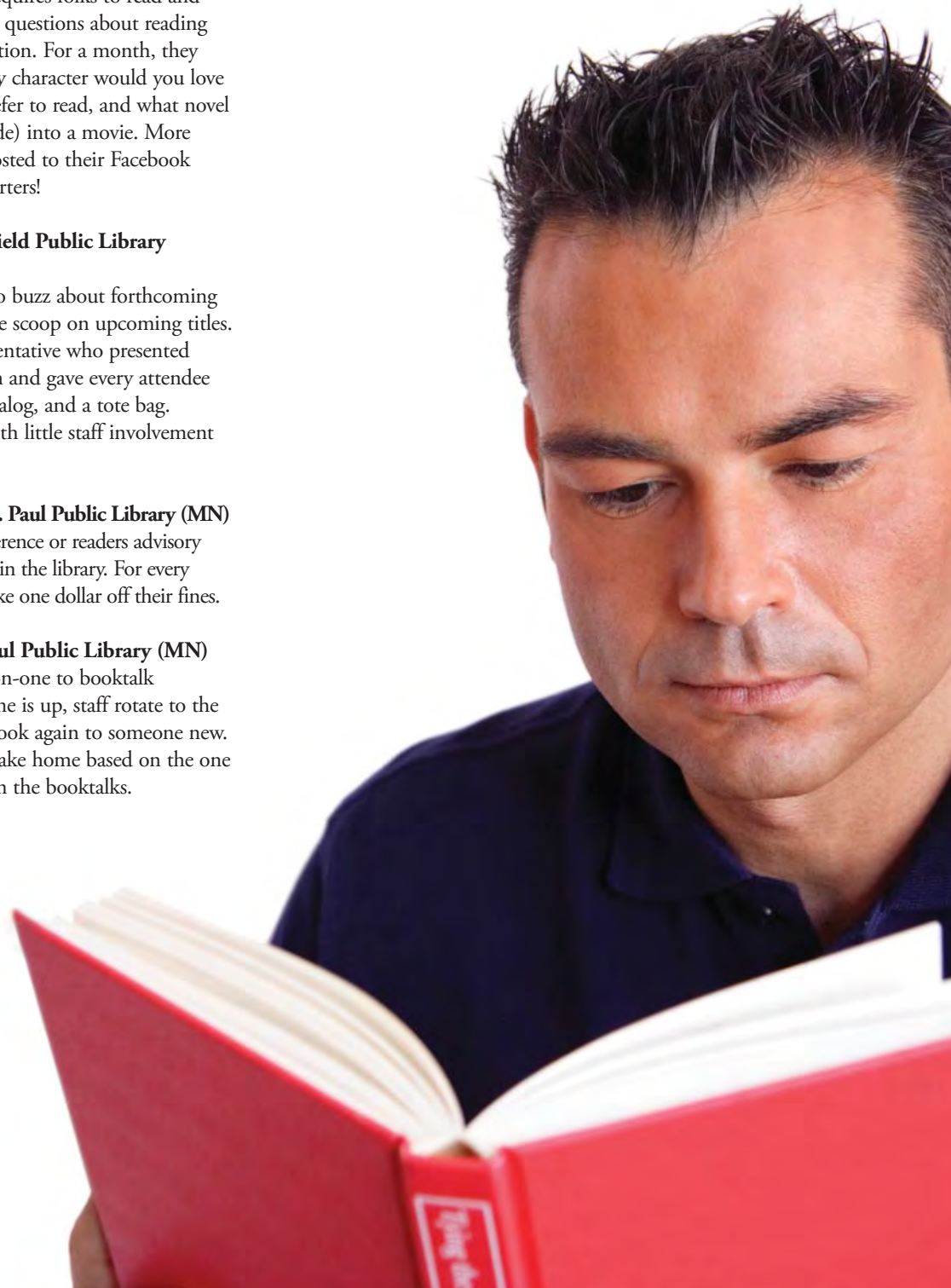
Library staff meet with patrons one-on-one to booktalk a book for one minute. When the time is up, staff rotate to the next patron and booktalk the same book again to someone new. At the end, patrons select a book to take home based on the one they felt most “compatible” with from the booktalks.

## WHY SHOULD KIDS HAVE ALL THE FUN?

### **Storytime for Grownups — Elmhurst Public Library**

Being read to is a rare pleasure. It not only stimulates the mind, it invigorates the imagination. Invite your adult patrons to bring a bag lunch, sit back, and enjoy a short intriguing story read by a staff person for thirty minutes. You may be surprised to learn that adults enjoy this just as much as kids.

*Do you have a new, reinvented, or innovative idea you are offering your readers? Or even initiatives that you have dreamed up but haven't tried yet? We want to hear it all. Share your ideas and continue the conversation at #RASpringClean. 📖*





# ILA Welcomes New Members

We would love to welcome your friends and colleagues, too. By sponsoring a new member, you share the benefits of membership with others ... and help create a stronger and more effective voice to promote the highest quality library services for all people in Illinois.

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Nominating someone for an ILA Award has never been easier! Visit <http://www.ila.org/awards> to learn about all of the awards, then submit your nomination form and all supporting documentation via the ILA website. No service should go unrecognized, so toot your own horn or tell us who you think is the best! If you have any questions about the ILA Awards, please contact the ILA office at (312) 644-1896, or [ila.org/awards](http://ila.org/awards).



Illinois Library Association

**Nominations for all ILA Awards are due May 15, 2015.**



# Sally in Libraryland

**L**ibrary conferences are worth whatever it takes to get yourself to one! Opportunities to learn things, and to network with people you know and people you didn't know you needed to know about. If you haven't already, I urge you to consider attending Reaching Forward, quite possibly the best one-day library event ever!

Way back, twenty-six years ago when it began, it was envisioned as a conference for library assistants—those people who never get to go anywhere to talk to anybody, while other people were flying across the country to stay in hotels for days, and the people left behind were picking up a lot of the slack. In the intervening years, it has grown and changed, but still stayed committed to providing quality learning opportunities to library staff at all levels.

Full disclosure (hereinafter abbreviated to fd): I am a member (for life, I've been warned, as is everyone on the committee) of Reaching Forward's Planning Committee. Which is why I can tell you some of what you can look forward to at this year's event on May 8 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont (conveniently close to expressways AND the Blue Line).

Popular presenters will be with us again, for multiple sessions. If you are a fan of Kelly Krieg-Sigman, you'll be delighted to hear that she's presenting three different programs! Gail Johnson and Pam Parr are presenting an all-day, four-part program on Management Skills for the 21st Century. This is a really special event that requires pre-registration—go to [ReachingForward.net](http://ReachingForward.net) for more info.

Do you supervise shelvees (or perhaps you call them pages)? You'll be able to share your trials and tribulations with your peers, in a session moderated by Patricia Tunstall, author of

“Hiring, Training and Supervising Library Shelvees,” (who, more fd, I am proud to call my friend, and who has a lovely accent that would make attendance enjoyable even if you don't supervise pages).

No matter what phase of your library life you are in, you'll find plenty of interest. Jim Flanagan of Bentron Financial Group will be there to present a lively and informative discussion about Social Security, so you can make the most of the benefits you have earned.

Could you use a mentor? An opportunity unique for Reaching Forward, because seating is extremely limited and it will require signing up the day of the event, will be Speed Mentoring. Have a five-minute conversation with a dozen experienced library staff from all levels and all departments—and you can ask them anything! (More fd: I'll be moderating this one.)

Are you responsible for programs at your library? Attend the Performers' Showcase and get a taste of programs for adults, families, and children. Some of the performers will also be available in the exhibits area, so you can talk to them directly, and get up close and personal with their props, creatures, instruments, etc. Attend a panel of experienced presenters of bilingual programs. Or learn what other people are doing that might appeal to the twenty- to thirty-year-old segment of your population.

Many attendees (really nice people you would no doubt love to meet) spend their working lives right there on the very front lines. Who doesn't need new techniques for de-escalating behavior? Or ways to talk tech to patrons? Help with the popular-yet-again family history? And what the heck is STEAM (or STEM, depending on where you're from)?



“No matter what phase of your library life you are in, you’ll find plenty of interest.”

The breadth and depth of these programs are jaw-dropping. Learn things to help your career, to help you do your job, and to help your library get better and better: how to craft your message, how to stay relevant. If I continue to rave about the programs that I’m excited about, this piece will outgrow its designated space very quickly. Seriously, although the committee has tried its best to track programs, so many of you have so many interests that your biggest problem might be choosing which session to attend in each of the four time slots!

All told, there will be forty-four sessions from which to choose—all in one place, all in one day! Every single one—even the all-day management training with Gail Johnson and Pam Parr—is included in your registration fee AND there is a continental breakfast with an awards presentation to start the day on a high note, and a lovely lunch to give you a chance to meet new people and discuss what you’re learning, both ALSO included with your registration!

Between programs, since they are all conveniently in one place, there is time to roam the handily compact exhibit area. In addition to some of the performers from the Showcase, you can visit purveyors of library education (thinking about getting your LTA or MLS?), representatives from RAILS, vendors of sheets (a GIANT hit last year...), chocolates, and a whole variety of things related to your job, as well as your life!

Yes, I’m excited about this year’s conference. I know I say that every year, and every year I only get MORE excited. If you’ve attended, you probably understand. If you haven’t, this would be an excellent year to try it for the first time!

E-mail me at [Sallyinlibraryland@yahoo.com](mailto:Sallyinlibraryland@yahoo.com), and we’ll both learn something new! **ILA**

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## ◀ MY TURN ▶

| Sally Renaud, Charleston Carnegie Public Library and

Sarah Keister Armstrong, Fremont Public Library, Mundelein |

# Two More Trustee Voices

**Renaud:** The parking lot is full. Inside the front doors, families line up to check out materials. A woman peruses the new book section. A gentleman browses through the 10¢ magazine boxes. The Friends are meeting. The computer bays are filled with children, teenagers, and adults playing games and working.

And it all looks effortless. Like a well-oiled machine, the Charleston Carnegie Public Library hums along, attending to the needs of its patrons. That's what we see on the outside. Behind the scenes, books and media are purchased, shipped, interlibrary-loaned, and recycled. Programs imagined and coordinated are meeting the needs of the various populations in the small city of Charleston. Toilets are being cleaned. And the staff makes it look easy.

Can members of the Board of Trustees take credit? Well, maybe, a bit.

As a member of the board, I know the most important role the board plays in making success a reality is to hire and maintain a productive relationship with a good director. The board and the director must be able to envision and realize the best for the library, which, in turn, means the best for the community.

Good library directors with vision and drive are everything. The energy of good directors is infectious. We all feel that spirit and devotion to the library's mission, and together we work to make the re-imagined goals a reality.

What the board does behind the scenes ensures that the library director and staff can do their jobs. Basic structural oversight is paramount. As a board, we have what many would see as pedestrian functions. We pay bills. We review the employees' handbook. We review annual procedures. We fix leaky roofs.

But I don't see these as tedious at all. Instead, I know that if the board does its job, keeping the director accountable in terms of finances and engaging in substantial conversations that move the director through issues and ideas, we are inspiring and perhaps even provoking the kind of community interaction we want to encourage.

Paying bills and ensuring financial stability for the library is one kind of oversight. The other kind of routine oversight the board offers is that of the interested bystander. We act as the eyes, ears, and voice of our patrons and community. What does a newcomer see when he comes into the library for the first time? What challenges does a senior citizen have as he navigates the online catalog? Is a child's library experience a positive one? Is there a need for staff training or a new educational program for community members? Can the library's reputation in the community be improved?

In short, the board serves to help the director do his or her job. Working with clear oversight, strong goals, and accountability, the board and the director together can help make the library a strong, lively place for the community that seems to run effortlessly.

**Armstrong:** As a trustee at my library, a RAILS board member, and a library consultant, I have worked on and with quite a few library boards, each of which has its own unique personality and working style. They can range from the very hands-off board to the board that wants to know every detail of the library's operations to the board that is largely dysfunctional.

The most important thing I have learned as a library trustee is what the role of a trustee is and how to best serve within that function. Among the most imperative responsibilities of a public library trustee are: approving an annual tax levy (for district libraries), developing library policies, advocating for their library, and promoting what their library has to offer in their community.

Being a trustee is more than simply attending a meeting once a month. Being a successful board member can also include actively participating in committees, being aware of what's happening at the library, and supporting staff by getting to know them and what they do to serve the community they represent. It's also about being a serious steward of taxpayer dollars, ensuring that the library's annual budget is fiscally sound while reflecting the needs of the library and the community as a whole. That means closely scrutinizing requests for increased funding but, equally important, advocating for them when they are needed to advance the library's mission.

However, there is the opposite extreme, which is meddling in the day-to-day operations of the library. Management is the responsibility of the director, and oversight is the responsibility of the board. While it is important to be aware of major financial decisions and the strategic direction in which their library is heading, day-to-day tasks such as lower-level personnel issues, programming details, and collection development concerns are not the responsibility of trustees.

As a library consultant, I am usually most impressed with boards that hire a great director and support them to the level that allows the director to effectively do his or her job in running the daily operations of the library. Trustees who are in tune with their community and the unique needs of different constituencies bring valuable insight to their roles as public officials. Furthermore, boards that are cooperative with the director and other library staff and that can act in a respectful manner during public meetings—despite personal or political differences—will be best able to serve their communities.

There are many resources available to not only new trustees, but also longtime board members who want to keep up with current library trends and advocacy efforts. While some of these can be accessed via various library association websites, I encourage trustees to attend events where they can meet their counterparts in different libraries. Learning the differences among our public libraries—from how other boards operate to different library policies to new technologies that other libraries have adopted—will help library trustees gain fresh perspectives into their home libraries. **IA**

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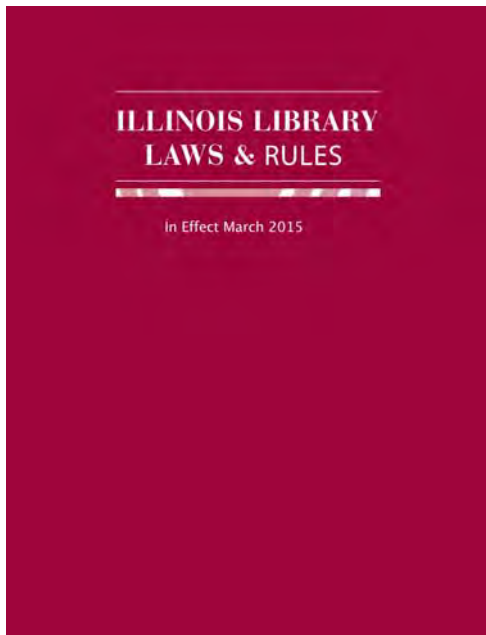


<http://www.ila.org/jobline>

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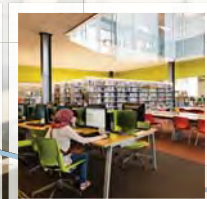
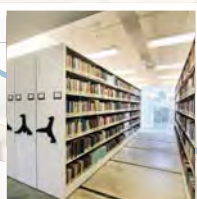
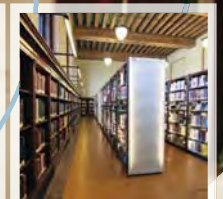
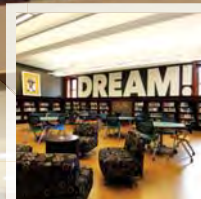
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