

Library Enhancements Committee Findings

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Library Enhancements Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Library Enhancements** is to champion access to information by equitably distributing library resources (e.g., online education resources, databases, and e-books), activating collaborative partnerships, and supporting freedom of thought.

If successful, this would mean increased library utilization, reduced number of Illinois residents not served by a library system, and increased number of inter-office initiatives.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities Library Enhancements Committee found, and public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Opportunity to improve equity of access to libraries and library resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We need to find a way to offer public library services to the one million residents of IL without access today" "Libraries are anchors in our communities and provide much-needed services to residents of Illinois" "Secretary of State needs to be a catalyst to expand access. There are one million Illinois residents without access to library resources or basic information needs" "There are some libraries with budgets of less than \$20,000"
Desire to provide a statewide resource package (e.g., databases and online educational resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "A core database package would equalize the information playing field and give every single person in the state the same access to essential and authoritative resources that can help them navigate their daily lives" "My mid-sized library, for example, sets aside \$65,000 for databases that we'd much rather use on programming or hiring another staff member"
Opportunity to narrow digital divides with technology hubs and mobile services (e.g., DMV pop-ups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "A state-coordinated and funded digital library would increase access and start to make a dent in the one million currently unserved" "Please coordinate across departments to offer services everywhere people go (i.e., DMV kiosks in libraries)"
Desire to support freedom of thought and diverse stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We need to affirm the importance of materials that represent all viewpoints and denounce the efforts of intimidation by those who seek to stifle representation and freedom of thought" "BIPOC and LGBTQ+ authors and readers are being disproportionately targeted for removal from library collections"



In addition to the opportunities outlined above, the committee noted the following.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Shortage of qualified librarians and library media specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Every school in Illinois needs a certified librarian. Not only do they curate collections to the needs of their school, but they also provide valuable instruction on information literacy" ▪ "I am the only certified librarian for approximately 1,200 students" ▪ "School districts need to have full-time, certified librarians in each building for students to be successful, master academic standards, and graduate with bright futures ahead of them"
Libraries are often inequitably funded and budget burdened, with an opportunity to leverage Secretary of State resources to funding gaps (e.g., for school libraries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Grants for public school libraries are very important to curating the best library possible for their patrons" ▪ "We need more funding to improve buildings and collections, especially as libraries are some of the last refuges for those experiencing homelessness" ▪ "Investing in public libraries invests in infrastructure, communities, education, businesses, and people of all ages"
Impact may be accelerated through collaborative partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Librarians also order books for the school and provide activities that form community and parent partnerships" ▪ "We can't accomplish everything we want to without partnerships. We are stronger together"
Desire to leverage Secretary of State resources to support school libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Decades of research, some of which is specific to Illinois, supports further investment in school libraries" ▪ "Data proves that schools with school libraries provide students with a more thorough and higher quality education!"

Recommendations:

Specific recommendations from the Library Enhancements Committee included:

- Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner organizations (e.g., ILA⁶, RAILS⁷, and IHLS⁸) to expand access
- Use Illinois State Library (ILS) budget to provide statewide library resources (i.e., databases) to increase access to information and relieve budget-burdened libraries
- Advance technology adoption and digital resources to automate internal procedures (e.g., recordkeeping), expand public facing services (e.g., WiFi), and remove geographic barriers in accessing library resources (e.g., e-books)

⁶ Illinois Library Association (ILA)

⁷ Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)

⁸ Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)



- Create an environment to attract and retain certified librarians and library media specialists
- Explore ways to expand and equitably distribute funding across libraries statewide
- Leverage the Illinois Library and Information Network (ILLINET) to educate and engage the public
- Leverage existing Secretary of State assets to test inter-agency collaborations (e.g., mobile DMV sites)
- Engage the public to drive understanding of end-user demands

To address these opportunities, the Library Enhancements Committee proposes the following strategies and short- and long-term actions the Office may take.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) to expand access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate with partner organizations and state agencies to understand the demographic characteristics of unserved areas ▪ Begin to identify opportunities to offer library cards to educators, students, and school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help shape legislation to expand equitable access (e.g., universal library system) ▪ Explore TBBS⁹ expansion opportunities, including additional outreach and education ▪ Host book talks and events to generate conversation, including diverse authors or stories with diverse characters ▪ Identify opportunities to improve trustee education and engagement ▪ Explore public-private (e.g., Amazon and Rivian) partnerships to expand resources and access in rural communities ▪ Leverage Secretary of State platform to educate system members, funders, and other stakeholders about who is unserved in Illinois
Use ISL ¹⁰ budget to provide statewide library resources (i.e., databases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fund a statewide core suite (e.g., ProQuest, Gale, EBSCO, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverage ISL negotiating power to supplement statewide resources with additional databases (e.g.,

⁹ Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS)

¹⁰ Illinois State Library (ISL)



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
to increase access to information and relieve budget-burdened libraries	<p>and World Book) of electronic databases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to support CARLI's¹¹ Online Educational Resources Initiative Create a line item in the ISL budget to finance library initiatives such as Online Educational Resources (OERs) 	<p>Reference USA, JSTOR, and The New York Times) and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use ISL purchasing power to negotiate with publishers to increase access to e-books and reduce associated licensing fees (i.e., License to Read)
Advance technology adoption and digital resources to automate internal procedures (e.g., recordkeeping), expand public facing services (e.g., WiFi), and remove geographic barriers in accessing library resources (e.g., e-books)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to digitize and automate paperwork requirements Continue to expand high-speed internet in rural service regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with academic institutions (e.g., University of Illinois, University of Chicago) to develop a Digital Navigator¹² program Explore options to offer a statewide digital library with partner organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) and academic institutions Explore solutions like rentable hot spots in places where Wi-Fi expansion may be limited Identify partners to co-host digital literacy workshops (e.g., navigating library resources) Revise Secretary of State protocol or make it easier for libraries to automate record keeping (e.g., Document Retention Process) Identify opportunities to participate (e.g., workshops, informational seminars) in the Federal Communications Commission's E-rate program to help schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband Identify partners to raise awareness about important

¹¹ Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

¹² Digital navigators are trained individuals, typically based in a community organization, who provide tailored support for the full spectrum of digital inclusion needs, from internet and device access to digital skill building



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
<p>Create an environment to attract and retain certified librarians and library media specialists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with academic institutions (e.g., University of Illinois, and University of Chicago) to identify policy and monetary levers Partner with peer organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) to offer professional development opportunities 	<p>community topics (e.g., health, financial, and education services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and empower young adults to participate in library-affiliated programs Raise awareness (e.g., grant opportunities and progress updates) at library-related conventions (e.g., Illinois Library Association’s Annual Conference) Explore an Illinois State Library Fellowship Program Explore opportunities to expand scholarships, offer subsidized loans, and pilot tuition reimbursement programs
<p>Explore ways to expand and equitably distribute funding across libraries statewide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline grant allocations and their intended versus actual return on investment Explore opportunities to make thoughtful appointments (e.g., Illinois State Library Advisory Committee and the Director of Illinois State Library) to support potential recommendations (e.g., databases, online educational resources, e-books, and certified librarians) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore additional Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant opportunities for community colleges Prioritize grant allocations based on need and impact potential Leverage Secretary of State platform to educate municipalities and explore local levy options Identify grant opportunities to better support summer reading programs Develop a suite of out-of-the-box marketing and public engagement templates for libraries to use



In addition to the above, this committee recommended the following potential strategies and actions to take.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Leverage the Illinois Library and Information Network (ILLINET) to educate (e.g., DEI and sustainability) and engage the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand-up a monthly special topic series (e.g., Climate & Sustainability Month, New Entrepreneur 101, DEI¹³, and LGBTQ+ Rights) Leverage Secretary of State platform to generate press exposure for public, school, and academic libraries (e.g., a calendar of the major library week celebrations and conventions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to bring Spanish language literacy programs to public libraries Pilot subsidized iREAD programs in partnership with the Illinois Library Association Continue to support successful ISL initiatives (e.g., afterschool programming and grant funding), build on enhancements, and pilot new ideas (e.g., expanded adult literacy programs) Increase collaboration and coordination between existing literacy programs (e.g., Adult Literacy and Child Literacy) Raise awareness for Illinois State Library Patent Repository
Leverage existing Secretary of State assets to test inter-agency collaborations (e.g., mobile DMV sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilot opportunities across Secretary of State departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase DMV mobile service pop-up sites across library system partners Stand-up voter registration sites before elections in high-traffic areas (e.g., Cook, Lake, and Kane County) in conjunction with local clerks and recorders Identify opportunities to partner with Secretary of State Department of Business Services; the State Chamber of Commerce; and the new University of Illinois Innovation Center to offer tutorials and new entrepreneur workshops
Engage the public to drive understanding of end-user demands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess offerings across libraries (e.g., books and other resources) and compare against user demands

¹³ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)