

Illinois History and Lincoln Collections

Annual Report, FY20 (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020)

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I. Unit Narrative

The Illinois History and Lincoln Collections acquires, preserves, and provides access to both print and manuscript materials documenting the history of Illinois as well as Abraham Lincoln's life and legacy. The IHLC holds approximately 36,000 volumes of cataloged print materials, including books, periodicals, and pamphlets, dating from the late 17th century to the present. In addition, the unit holds about a thousand manuscript collections dating from the early 18th through the 21st century that range from single-item collections to those spanning several dozen cubic feet. We assist researchers both on-site and remotely and respond to reference and photoduplication requests from around the country and the world to provide access to our collections.

In the first eight and a half months of the past fiscal year, IHLC continued our efforts to make our collections more accessible and visible. We curated two exhibits and hosted two open house-style events to engage visitors with our collections further. We also continued to prepare our catalog records for the Alma/Primo migration and to acquire and process new print and manuscript holdings. Our presence in the Digital Library continued to expand, with components of a dozen more collections added by the end of the fiscal year.

In the last three and a half months of the fiscal year, IHLC pivoted to adjust to the circumstances of the pandemic and stay-at-home order, only returning to very limited onsite work in mid-to-late June. We set aside several projects that required onsite work and focused primarily on remote outreach and converting our legacy archival finding aids to a more consistent, accessible format. We also prepared to launch a COVID-19 collecting initiative in July 2020 to document Illinoisans' experiences during this pandemic.

1. Major Activities and Accomplishments

Increased access to IHLC materials in the Digital Library

- Digitized or born digital content from 12 collections was added to the Digital Library in FY19, bringing the total number of collections to 30.

Enhanced descriptive access to materials the unit's archival and manuscript collections

- We added or substantively updated or improved archival descriptions for 12 collections during the 2020 fiscal year.
- From mid-March to the end of FY20, we converted 35 finding aids to a more consistent, searchable, and navigable format.

Worked to prepare our catalog records for the migration from Voyager to Alma

- IHLC staff assessed and identified possible item-specific notes in BIB records in order to move these to the holding records.
- In collaboration with staff in ACS, the IHLC contributed to efforts to assess and overlay records having identical OCLC numbers.

Continued outreach and engagement initiatives in the unit

- The IHLC installed two exhibits in our reading room and hosted two open house-style events, one for the closing of the summer/fall exhibit and one for the closing of the fall/winter exhibit.
- Throughout the year, the IHLC continued to highlight the history of the state of Illinois and Lincoln and promote our collections over social media platforms and through our blog.

2. Major Challenges

As in past years, the climate control in the IHLC stacks remains a challenge. We again used multiple dehumidifiers for significant portions of the year to keep humidity levels reasonable and to reduce the risk of mold growth. Overall, due to the less-than-ideal temperature and humidity levels over the course of the year, all three of our stacks areas (two cubes on deck 7 and one on deck 8) were rated as being “ok” for natural aging and two of the three were rated as “risk” for mechanical damage (out of a three-level rating scale: "good," "ok," and "risk") by the algorithms in the eClimate notebook system used for tracking and evaluating the preservation qualities of the spaces’ environmental conditions.

In December and January, we also had a leak in part of the stacks due to a faulty valve located above the ceiling-mounted ductwork. Fortunately, no collection material was damaged, only preservation supplies, but this did cost a significant amount of time for staff to assess the potential damage, take steps to cover everything in the area with plastic sheeting, and work with facilities in the library and on campus to identify and rectify the problem.

3. Significant Changes

The reporting line for the unit was changed in August 2019 from the AUL for User Services to the Head of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Allison Kilberg started in May 2020 as the Lincoln Collection Research Specialist, a new academic hourly position.

4. Contributions to Library-wide Programs

Reference, research consultations, and other information services

- The IHLC responds to reference questions from a variety of sources, including University of Illinois faculty, staff, and students; academic researchers from other institutions; individuals researching genealogy or family history; authors conducting research for both fiction and non-fiction books; and others. Reference interactions took place in person as well as over email and the phone.
- During the 2020 fiscal year, the IHLC fulfilled an estimated 30 requests for scans of materials for about 24 patrons, typically remote researchers. Approximately 6 additional digitization requests for 38 folders or items of IHLC materials were referred to the Digitization Services unit.

Collection management

- Acquisitions: Highlights from FY20 included several pieces of Lincoln ephemera relating to the 1864 election, a letter discussing the Great Chicago fire other fires in the Midwest, a set of documents related to Morris Birkbeck and his efforts to encourage English immigration to the state in the early 1800s, and various nineteenth-century imprints from different parts of the

state. We also acquired two documents of a Civil War merchant (funded by a Library Friends gift generated from *Friendscript*).

- Preservation: The IHLC continued to collaborate with colleagues in the Preservation Services unit to assess and improve the preservation conditions of collection materials. The main project for FY20 was the treatment of some Civil War diaries written with ink gall ink. Another project, continued from the previous fiscal year, was co-supervising a practicum student conducting a preservation assessment of our small archival collections.
- Archival Collections Processing: Work continued on reducing the backlog of unprocessed archival collections, as well as enhancing descriptive information available online through the IHLC Manuscript Collections Database, especially the PDF finding aids.

Digital Content Creation

- Over the course of FY20, Digitization Services digitized content from about 15 archival collections from the IHLC. About 26% of these collections or components of collections were patron requests, 20% for an outside organization's exhibit, about 13% were for an IHLC exhibit, and the remaining approximately 33% were selected for digitization by the IHLC to go into the Digital Library.
- Over the course of the past fiscal year, 228 books were digitized for the Internet Archive.

Staff training and development

- In June, several members of the IHLC staff attended SAA webinars hosted by the IDCAP (Improving Digital Content Appraisal and Processing) team.

Diversity

- In FY20, many of our social media posts featured women throughout the history of Illinois, both everyday life and key historical figures. Through a combination of #OnThisDay posts, highlighting collection materials that belonged to or were created by women, and Trivia Tuesday posts, the stories of women were presented regularly throughout the year and expanded beyond specific historic events and women's history month.
- In September 2019, we published a blog post on the Knight Family Correspondence that detailed the lives of two sisters who had emigrated from Ireland. The post featured letters the women wrote to one another as they settled into life near Bloomington, Illinois. Their correspondence provides a first-hand perspective of women's lives, duties, and experiences settling in Illinois.

Public Engagement

- IHLC staff installed two small exhibits in the IHLC reading room over the course of the 2020 fiscal year: "The Iron Horse of the Prairie State" (July - November 2019) and "'Here I Have Lived': Recreating the Land of Lincoln" (November 2019 – March 2020). One additional exhibit, "Constructing Utopias: Examining Communitarianism Efforts in America, 1825-1940" was fully curated and designed by mid-March but not installed due to the pandemic.
- IHLC loaned five items and facilitated digitization for the production of facsimiles of fourteen more items for display in an exhibit at the Museum of the Grand Prairie titled "How Long Must Women Wait? Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights in Champaign County."

- IHLC staff continued to create blog posts on materials and topics represented in our collections. In FY20, we published fourteen blog posts.
- The IHLC continued to engage with followers on its three social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) to increase the visibility of the unit and further engagement with Illinois history and Lincoln. At the end of FY20, we had 507 followers on Twitter (a net increase of 47), 186 followers on Facebook (at net increase of 25), and 332 followers on Instagram (a net increase of 31 followers).

5. Progress on Unit Annual Goals for FY2020

Improve access to materials in archival and manuscript collections (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue to reduce the backlog of unprocessed archival collections and additions: processing work over the past fiscal year focused mostly on new acquisitions (purchases and donations) from the past few years.
- Continue work to enhance existing descriptive information about archival collections available in the IHLC Manuscript Collections Database (Archon) to improve access and discovery: the focus of this goal shifted substantially as we took on a finding aid conversion project for remote work, but we made considerable progress in this project, converting 35 finding aids by the end of the fiscal year.
- Develop and implement a process to gain better physical and intellectual control over archival materials in oversize flat drawers: this project stalled due to the pandemic.
- Develop an approach to provide online descriptive access to items in the unit's extensive collection of Lincoln-related prints and ephemera: a finding aid for this collection was published in May 2020.
- Continue to develop and implement procedures and processes for organizing, rehousing, and providing access to the backlog of periodicals: progress continued in the first part of the year, but this work was stalled due to the pandemic.

Increase online access to components of our collections to researchers worldwide through the Digital Library (SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Select and prepare more collections for partial or full digitization through the Digitization Services unit. Identify themes represented in our collections as a whole and work to make the selection of collections partially or fully available online through the Digital Library more reflective of the diverse nature of our holdings: a dozen more collections were added to the Digital Library during the fiscal year, though our digitization plans were stalled in the spring due to the pandemic.
- Refine our processes and develop standard procedures for assigning copyright statements to archival materials in the Digital Library: we have developed approaches for some more complicated statements for specific cases, but documentation of guidelines remains incomplete.

Refine and improve procedures for acquisitions and collection development (SD1: "Implement sustainable approaches to collection development policies"; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Draft a collection development policy for the IHLC: on hold again, in part due to the impact of the pandemic in the spring.
- Take steps toward building our collections in areas identified for growth: we have made some new acquisitions in areas tentatively identified as higher priorities.

Improve descriptive access for our print collection (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to...")

- Continue resolving issues with our catalog records to prepare for Alma migration: prior to migration, we were able to move all or nearly all of our item-specific notes from the BIB records to the holding records.
- Refine workflows with cataloging ACS staff for cataloging rare materials to optimize the division of labor within the workflow between the cataloger and IHLC staff: these were revised and adjusted as planned.

Increase visibility of, and engagement with, our collections (SD3: "Implement library outreach...", "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue to explore new opportunities to feature our collections in ways that educate and engage our audiences and increase the unit's visibility: for this year, we chose to host an event both in the fall and the spring in order to more directly showcase our holdings in our reading room.
- Explore the feasibility of continuing to host or co-host at least one event per semester (as we did in FY19) to connect more people with our collections: we hosted one event in the fall, and one in the spring, both highlighting the closing of an exhibit.
- Work to connect directly with more professors to encourage increased opportunities for student engagement with our collections: mostly limited progress; some plans for fall 2020 Illinois History class.

6. Unit Annual Goals for FY2021

Improve access to materials in archival and manuscript collections (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue work on the finding aid conversion project to enhance existing descriptive information about archival collections available in the IHLC Manuscript Collections Database (Archon) to improve access and discovery.
- Continue to reduce the backlog of unprocessed archival collections and additions, as well as working to optimize the workflows used for processing new acquisitions of manuscript collections.
- Review and assess subject headings used for Lincoln-related archival and manuscript collections.
- Revise Lincoln-related archival collection descriptions for improved consistency and clarity.

Further descriptive access for our print collection (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to...")

- Assess Lincoln catalog records and develop and implement plans to enhance descriptive access to these materials.
- Explore using collection headings or other catalog access points to provide additional provenance information for certain collections and donors that have been key to the development of the collection.
- Develop new workflows for cataloging rare print materials for IHLC during the pandemic.

Refine and improve procedures for acquisitions and collection development (SD1: "Implement sustainable approaches to collection development policies"; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Define areas of collecting focus for the unit and guidelines and priorities for acquiring materials in different areas.

- Conduct research and analyze the development of the Lincoln collection since the founding donation of books from Harlan and Henrietta Horner in the 1950s to inform future collecting priorities and areas of focus.
- Continue to develop and implement a collecting project to document Illinoisans' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continue to increase digital access to our archival and manuscript collections, especially to facilitate learning and engagement with primary sources worldwide (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD2: "Strengthen collections in all formats..."; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue to identify collections for digitization that will provide remote access to primary sources for students and researchers for a variety of themes and topics in our holdings.
- Explore methods to enhance access and discoverability of our digitized content.

Increase visibility of, and engagement with, our collections (SD3: "Implement library outreach...", "Provide access to collections...")

- Explore new opportunities to feature our collections in ways that educate and engage our audiences and increase the unit's visibility in the context of the current circumstances of the pandemic and staff resources.

Contribute to implementing and enhancing digital systems for access to special collections materials (SD1: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3: "Provide access to collections...")

- Implement the Aeon request account system for Illinois History and Lincoln Collections materials and contribute to expanding Aeon to University Archives as well.
- Implement features in Archon to facilitate Aeon requests and other improvements to promote a better user experience for researchers and to provide staff with needed information in Aeon.
- Collaborate with others in the division and the library to improve Primo's features and limitations with regard to special collections materials.

7. Support needed for these specific goals & the unit's overall mission

The greatest need is consistent, permanent staffing support. During FY20, IHLC continued to have only one full-time employee and no permanent hourly wage budget. Relying heavily on allocations of temporary funding for hourly employees to maintain basic unit operations is far from ideal and makes longer-term planning difficult. Our graduate and undergraduate student positions have been key for sustaining both the ongoing work of the unit as well as for our new outreach and digitization initiatives.

To reiterate, hourly wage support is critical for fulfilling the goals of the IHLC, as well as maintaining basic unit operations. The ability of the unit to pursue its mission more fully, however, will continue to be constrained by a heavy reliance on temporary student staffing without a permanent, predictable wage budget and/or a second full-time employee on staff.

8. Number of Graduate Assistants/Hourly

FTE:

- Graduate assistants: 0.25
- Graduate hourly: 0.75 for summer 2019; 1.1 for fall 2019; 1.0 for spring 2019; 0.3 for summer 2019

Head count:

- Graduate assistants: 1
- Graduate hourly: 3 for summer 2019; 3 (not double counting the GA) for fall 2019 and spring 2020; 1 for summer 2019

9. Funding sources for Graduate Assistants/Hourly

Graduate assistants:

- State funds: 0.25 FTE

Graduate hourly:

- State funds: 0.3 FTE for summer 2019; 0.3 FTE for fall 2019; 0.33 FTE spring 2020; 0.3 FTE for summer 2020
- IHLC endowment funds: 0.55 FTE for fall 2019; 0.5 FTE for spring 2020
- IHLC gift funds: 0.2 FTE for fall 2019 and 0.16 FTE for spring 2020

10. Major Responsibilities and Contributions Made by GAs/Hourly

Graduate assistant:

- Processed sixteen small archival collections (8 completed, 8 pending review), and an addition to a larger collection (pending review).
- Conducted event planning and promotion for the Lincoln birthday event in February.
- Assisted student assistant with the exhibit curation process for the fall/winter reading room exhibit he curated.
- Drafted procedures for the finding aid conversion project.
- Supervised student assistant work on the finding aid conversion project.
- Assisted with the hiring process for student assistants and the incoming GA.
- Provided reference services to on-site and remote researchers.

Graduate hourly employees:

- Processed archival collections, including processing new accessions and those from the backlog; reprocessed existing collections to improve access to materials; and reviewed and improved access and preservation for partially processed collections.
- Identified finding aids for conversion, converted finding aids, and reviewed finding aids converted by student assistants.
- Curated an exhibit for the IHLC reading room (not installed due to COVID-19 restrictions).
- Identified and moved local notes from BIB records to holding records in preparation for the migration from Voyager to Alma.
- Identified and prepared books for cataloging, and processed books returning from cataloging, including adding copy-specific notes where needed.
- Assessed the condition of books identified for scanning through the Internet Archive scanning center.
- Created metadata and composed collection descriptions for digitized materials to go into the Digital Library.

- Led the outreach and planning for the unit Open House for closing of the fall exhibit.
- Composed social media posts to promote Illinois history and the IHLC on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and the IHLC blog.
- Developed a research guide to labor history materials and revised an existing guide on communitarian materials.
- Provided reference services to on-site and remote researchers.

II. Statistical Profile

1. Facilities

User seating:

- 4 seats around the table in the reading room
- 1 at a public access computer (adjustable height computer table in reading room)

Hours:

- Fall and spring semesters (until March 13): 9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday (40 hours/week)
- Fall and winter breaks: 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (20 hours/week)
- Spring break: 1-4pm, Monday-Tuesday (March 16-17); closed to the public due to COVID-19 response measures starting March 18
- Summer break: closed to the public due to COVID-19 response measures

2. Personnel

Professional staff (1 FTE total)

- Krista Gray (Full year): Academic Professional, 1.0 FTE

Academic Hourly Staff (0.7 FTE total for the summer)

- Allison Kilberg (starting May 2020): summer 2020 at 0.7 FTE

Graduate Assistants (0.25 FTE total for the academic year)

- Allison Kilberg (August 2019-May 2020): academic year at 0.25 FTE

Graduate Hourly Staff (about 0.75 FTE for summer, 1.1 FTE for fall, and 1.0 FTE for spring)

- Allison Kilberg (starting August 2018): about 0.15 FTE supplementing assistantship in fall and spring
- Claire Weibel (starting September 2018): about 0.5 FTE for summer 2019, 0.4 FTE for fall 2019, and 0.35 for spring 2020
- Courtney Smith (August 2019-May 2020): about 0.25 FTE for fall and 0.2 FTE for spring
- Cindy Tian (starting June 2019): about 0.3 FTE for summer 2019
- Jessie Knoles (starting September 2019): about 0.3 FTE for fall 2019, 0.33 FTE for spring 2020, and 0.3 FTE summer 2020

Student Assistant Staff (about 0.75-1.1 FTE, varying by semester)

- Hailey Vasquez (August 2019-July 2020): about 0.1 FTE for fall and spring and about 0.5 FTE for summer

- Austin Justice (August 2019-May 2020): about 0.2 FTE for fall and 0.33 FTE for spring
- Amina Malik (starting September 2019): about 0.3 FTE for fall and 0.2 FTE for spring and summer 2020
- Caitlin Lopez-Battung (starting September 2019): about 0.15 FTE for fall, 0.2 FTE for spring, and 0.15 FTE for summer 2020

Extra Help Staff (about 0.2 FTE for summer 2019; about 0.5 FTE for summer 2020)

- Michelle Miller (May-August 2019): summer 2019 at 0.2 FTE
- Claire Weibel (starting May 2020): summer 2020 at 0.23 FTE
- Courtney Smith (starting May 2020): summer 2020 at 0.25 FTE

Hourly wage budget (used to fund both student and graduate hourly positions) for FY20: \$ 21,678.86 (academic year 2019-2020, \$16,000; net total from summer 2019 and 2020, \$5,678.86). This supported approximately:

- Summer 2019 (July-August): 0.3 FTE of grad hourly support
- Fall 2019: 0.3 FTE of grad hourly support & 0.6 FTE of student hourly support (half as FWS)
- Spring 2020: 0.33 FTE of grad hourly support & 0.5 FTE of student hourly (a third as FWS)
- Summer 2020 (May-June): 0.3 FTE of grad hourly support, 0.8 FTE of student hourly support, and 0.2 FTE extra help

3. User Services

Gate Count (head counts as reported during FY20 Sweeps Week)

- Fall: 20 visits/week (Internal statistics kept throughout the semester: average of 9 visits/week)
- Spring: 8 visits/week (Internal statistics kept throughout the semester: average 6 visits/week before we closed in mid-March)
- Annual extrapolation: 384, adjusted after campus closures (Note: the fiscal year total as compiled from internal unit statistics was significantly different, accounting for 233 visits)

Circulation

Note: All IHLC materials are non-circulating. The circulation statistics generated by Voyager therefore do not present an accurate picture of the nature of circulation in the IHLC and are not reported here.

Internal statistics for retrieval requests (note: these statistics do not include items pulled for the Internet Archive scanning project or for Collections Care batch rehousing projects):

Requests for:	Books and other print materials	Manuscript collections	Microfilm reels	Total
On-site researchers	138	136	9	283
Remote researchers	13	30	5	48
Subtotal (on-site and remote researchers)	151	166	14	331
Staff use for outreach events/projects	36	79	0	115
Internal staff use (e.g., processing)	260	125	0	385
Subtotal (IHLC staff)	296	204	0	500
Total	447	370	14	831

Reference interactions (from DeskTracker, as reported during FY20 Sweeps Week)

- Fall: 16 total/week (15 in-person, 1 phone)
- Spring: 7 total/week (3 email, 2 phone, 2 in-person)
- Annual extrapolation: 368

Presentations (from the Instructional Statistics database)

- None this year, in part due to the pandemic.

4. Other Statistics

Archival processing (internal statistics)

Work completed to improve access to archival collections in our Manuscript Collections Database (Archon) during FY20, arranged by type of work completed:

Type of processing work completed	Number of collections
New collection in Archon; processed from scratch (includes collections that were in Archon previously but with an empty scope note, or hidden in Archon but required extensive changes or additions)	7
Update in Archon (incorporating collection additions, adding an inventory, and/or improving the description)	5
Total	12

Progress on collections processing and researchers' access to collections descriptions online, based on data exported from the IHLC Manuscript Collections Database (Archon):

Collections with:	As of July 1, 2019	As of June 30, 2020
Descriptions that are publicly available in Archon	93.3% (981 collections)	92.6% (989 collections)
Basic records only (publicly available); no description	1.8% (19 collections)	2.5% (27 collections)
Draft descriptions, hidden from the public	3.7% (39 collections)	3.7% (40 collections)
Basic records, hidden from the public	1.2% (13 collections)	1.1% (12 collections)
Total	1,052	1,068

Note: The increase in basic records in archon with no description in part reflects the circumstances of the pandemic in not being able to complete processing for new acquisitions as normal.