

Illinois History and Lincoln Collections

Annual Report, FY22 (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022)

Prepared by Krista Gray, Archives Program Officer

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 over 1,100 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 respond to reference and photoduplication requests from around the country and the world to provide access to our collections.

During the 2022 fiscal year, IHLC undertook several collaborative efforts to enhance access to documents of the history of Illinois and its inhabitants. This included the establishment of the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives, working with Preservation Services to provide access to images of early nineteenth century Illinois field notes held by the Illinois State Archives, and developing an approach to meet both patron and library needs to provide access to thousands of cards documenting the contents of a collection compiled in the early history of the Illinois Historical Survey. We also conducted archival arrangement and description for dozens of new collections, moved our barcoding project out of the pilot stage, and began to build more web archives collections. In fall 2021, our reading room opened for walk-in visitors for the first time since mid-March 2020, and we continued to fulfill a larger than usual number of patron requests for digitization.

1. Major Activities and Accomplishments

Established the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives

- In September 2021, the Library and Illini Hillel issued a joint press release announcing the establishment of the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives. The project stemmed from a collaboration between the Library, Illini Hillel, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, Mrs. Sybil Mervis and other members of the Danville Jewish community.
- Arranged and described over 8 cubic feet of materials donated and made 5 collections available for research.
- Developed digital, web, and print resources about the collecting initiative and donation process.

Enhanced descriptive access to archival and manuscript collections

- Added 61 new collection descriptions to our Manuscripts Collections Database, and 7 new box/folder lists. This is the result of arranging and describing a large number of new acquisitions, including the initial collections of the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives, as well as previously hidden collections discovered within unit administrative files and unprocessed or undescribed collections.
- Added revised inventories/container lists for 33 collections in our Manuscripts Collections Database, updating to more searchable, accessible, and discoverable formats as well as improving descriptions or adding additional material.
- Improved existing descriptions for 75 collections.

Furthered remote access to collection materials

- Added digitized content to 7 collections in the Digital Library. Six new digitized collections were added, along with additional materials from one collection that had been in the Digital Library previously.
- Processed requests for reproductions of over 70 folders or items for patrons.
- In partnership with the Illinois State Archives, processed, arranged, and created basic metadata for over 100,000 image files of original early nineteenth-century field notes for Illinois. This project is still in process due to the challenges of ingesting this volume of content into Medusa.

Continued to develop web archives for select topics

- Work began in late FY21 to establish web archives for IHLC on select topics, including controversies over Lincoln statues and the COVID-19 pandemic response in Illinois.
- In summer 2022, we began to develop plans to conduct more quality control on the crawls, improve access by adding metadata within Archive-It, and also began plans for creating a web archive to preserve websites documenting Central Illinois Jewish Communities.

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 (addition 2 and 3 on deck 7 and addition 2 on deck 8) were rated as being “ok” for natural aging and all three were also 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.

3. Significant Changes

Unit operations

Our on-site unit operations have mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Personnel

IHLC hired a new Graduate Assistant specifically to support the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives in August 2021.

Service profile and programs

In July and August 2021, the IHLC reading room was open by appointment only. For fall 2021, we opened by appointment in the morning and for walk-ins in the afternoon. In spring 2022, we were open 9am-12pm and 1-5pm for walk-ins. Going forward, we plan to be open 1-5pm during the summer and semester breaks, and open 9am-12pm and 1-5pm during the fall and spring semester. With the exception of closing over the noon hour, this replicates our pre-pandemic hours. IHLC is heavily reliant on GAs and hourly student employees, and we have found that closing over the noon hour helps immensely with scheduling student shifts and reducing the amount of stress placed on remaining staff when someone is out sick.

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 and students from other institutions; individuals researching genealogy or family history; authors conducting research for articles or books; and others.
- During the 2022 fiscal year, the IHLC fulfilled 71 requests for images of materials for 37 patrons. This is lower than FY21, but still much higher than FY20 and earlier.

Student success

- IHLC provides reference and research assistance to students for class projects.
- IHLC offers opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience working in archives and special collections. This includes ongoing part-time job opportunities in the unit as well as occasional opportunities (which are referred to the history department academic advisor for distribution) to work as a proxy researcher for those who cannot visit themselves.

Instructional services

- To support a final project using primary sources in Prof. Oberdeck's HIST 273 Illinois History class, IHLC updated a guide to digital primary sources in Illinois history produced in the last fiscal year with newly digitized content. The Archives Program Officer for IHLC presented to the class over Zoom on how to navigate these online databases and find various primary sources.
- The Lincoln Collection Research Specialist presented a session for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute titled, " 'He Has Passed From Time to Eternity': How the Nation Mourned Lincoln"
- The Graduate Assistant for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives (CIJCA) and the Archives Program Officer for IHLC attended a virtual class session for Jewish Studies 495 (Jewish Life in Small Central Illinois Communities—Workshop in Oral and Archival History). The GA taught the class about the CIJCA, how to use our manuscript collection database, and how to interpret finding aids.

Facility management

- Continued to participate in discussions regarding the planned renovation of the UGL to be the new Archives and Special Collections Building.

Scholarly communications and publishing

- Received two permissions requests for items in our collections. Consulted with the Copyright Librarian in both cases given the complexity of permissions (given the language of the Deed of Gift in the second case) and determining whether something would be in public domain (given the unknowns of which country's copyright law would apply given the location and date of the photograph in the first case).

Collection access and management

- Acquisitions: Some highlights from FY22 included an original 1857 letter from Abraham Lincoln to John Rosette editor of the *Springfield Republican*; the initial accessions of collections for the

Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives; a letter from a woman describing the events that took place in Alton in October and November 1837, including the murder of Elijah Lovejoy; several collections of nineteenth century family correspondence and papers; a carte de visite depicting Lincoln's funeral procession in Philadelphia; and a letter from a man in Rockford describing local reactions to the end of the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

- 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 conservation and collections care projects for FY22 were inactive mold assessment and remediation, rehousing fragile glass plate negatives, and modifying housing for bulky oversized materials.
- Archival Collections Processing: Work continued on arranging and describing new archival collections as well as enhancing descriptive information available online through the IHLC Manuscript Collections Database, both for PDF finding aids and collection-level descriptions.
- Barcoding: Efforts to barcode our archival collections moved out of the pilot phase in fall 2021.

Digital Content Creation

- Over the course of FY21, Digitization Services handled digitization from seven different archival collections in IHLC. About half were in response to patron requests and half were selected as digitization projects.
- IHLC collaborated with the Digital Reformatting Coordinator to fulfill a request for online access to 2 catalog card drawers of calendar cards for materials in the French Archives and Depositories collection. These were digitized through the Internet Archive scanning center. In addition, 3 books were digitized for patrons through the Internet Archive scanning center.
- IHLC also collaborated with Digital Reformatting Coordinator to provide digital access to the contents of 9 reels of microfilm for patrons.
- IHLC worked with two Digital Strategies GAs to create additional and enhanced metadata for the Alton Telegraph Printer's Scrapbook of printed ephemera from mid-nineteenth-century Alton, Illinois, for the Digital Library.

Organizational development and training

- The Archives Program Officer created documentation and provided assistance in training University Archives and Map Library staff in using Aeon to manage specific types of requests (remote storage requests for UA and digitization requests for the Map Library).

Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- FY22 saw the establishment of the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives (CIJCA) at the IHLC. By the end of FY22, 5 new collections had been added to our Manuscript Collections database documenting Jewish life in central Illinois.
- Questions regarding the religious nature of CIJCA materials for the purposes of description and occasional deaccession were directed to leadership in the Program in Jewish Culture and Society and/or the Illini Hillel.
- IHLC proposed a session for the University's iExplore program for middle and high school youth in the community focused on personal reactions to the assassination to Abraham Lincoln that was accepted and scheduled for July 2022.

Outreach and Public Engagement

- IHLC installed two short-term “pop-up” exhibits in the reading room during FY22. The first (late fall 2021) was entitled, “Working on the Illinois Central Railroad,” and highlighted materials from our collections that documented aspects of the workers’ experience on the Illinois Central Railroad. The second (February-March 2022) honored Abraham Lincoln’s 213th birthday and was titled, “The Lincoln Legacy: Honoring His Life Through the Years.” This second pop-up exhibit garnered considerable attention and was chosen by several students to feature in short video stories for a class that collaborated with the campus television station.
- In late spring, we finally installed our regularly scheduled exhibit that had been planned for installation spring break of 2020: “Constructing Utopias: Examining Communitarianism Efforts in America, 1825-1940.”
- A digital exhibit, “The Lincoln Room at the University of Illinois: 70 Years Since its Inception,” was launched in November 2021 to commemorate the 70-year anniversary of the establishment of the Lincoln Room.
- IHLC’s GA for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives (CIJCA) presented to two external groups over zoom about the preservation, arrangement, and description work completed or in progress for the materials that comprise the CIJCA. These events, one for a group in Illinois and another for a group in Florida, were coordinated by Executive Director of Hillel Erez Cohen and Sybil Mervis, the primary donor for the initial accessions of the CIJCA.
- IHLC staff continued to create blog posts on materials and topics represented in our collections, albeit at a smaller scale than in the past. In FY22, we published four blog posts: one on the COVID-19 collecting project, one on the custodians of the Lincoln Tomb, one interview with the curator of our long-delayed exhibit on communitarianism, and one on the early efforts of the Illinois Historical Survey to collect copies of relevant documents from archives and repositories in France, a project that spanned the outbreak of both world wars.
- The IHLC continued to engage with followers on its three social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) to increase the visibility of the unit and further engagement with Illinois history and Lincoln. Our followers have increased on all platforms (as of September 30, 2022, 744 on Twitter, 565 on Instagram, and 439 on Facebook), but historical data for the fiscal year is not available for Facebook or Instagram. During FY22, we gained an additional 85 followers on Twitter and our tweets received 20,982 impressions.

5. Progress on Unit Annual Goals for FY2022

Improve access to materials in archival and manuscript collections (SD1b: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Arrange and describe first accession for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives (CIJCA)/Mervis Archives.
 - Completed; the initial set of collections were opened for research in February 2022.
- Collaborate with faculty in the Program for Jewish Culture & Society about a potential class that may conduct oral histories for the CIJCA (also SD2c: “Strengthen collections in all formats...” and SD4c: “Build active, sustainable partnerships”).
 - Completed, but the process to accession oral histories is still in progress.
- Develop a processing and access plan for the COVID-19 project materials collected.
 - A plan was developed but not fully implemented.

- Improve access and preservation conditions for unusually sized materials in several large archival collections.
 - This work is ongoing. We made progress in rehousing several oversized materials within the Frederick W. Perkins collection, with the assistance of collections care to customize the boxes; however, much work remains to be done in other collections.
- Continue the barcoding and rehousing project for archival collections to improve physical control and access over the materials.
 - This work is ongoing. By the end of the fiscal year barcoding and rehousing work had begun for 8 out of approximately 24 ranges of archival boxes in the IHLC stacks.
- Develop plans to increase intellectual and physical control over our unprocessed collections.
 - This work is ongoing.
- Increase physical and intellectual control over the content of our oversized flat materials in archival collections.
 - This project was begun in FY22 but not completed.
- Develop a plan to complete the rehousing project for small collections begun by a practicum student in summer 2019.
 - This was identified as a summer 2022 project and started after the close of FY22.

Refine and improve procedures for acquisitions and collection development (SD1a: "Implement sustainable approaches to collection development policies"; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Finish drafting a collection development policy for IHLC.
 - This is still in progress. Work continued on collection analysis to inform the policy.
 - We also began drafting a policy specifically for web archives collections in summer 2022.
- Develop a web page with information on our acquisitions procedures for potential donors to reference.
 - We did not create a web page, but we did create a form for prospective donors to fill out that includes information about our procedures.

Continue to refine our use of technologies and digital systems to support public services and access to our collections (SD1b: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue to implement new workflows for Aeon to better serve researcher needs.
 - We have continued to refine our workflows within Aeon over the course of our first full year of using it.
- Assess our collections in the Digital Library to identify collections and materials that might benefit from the new OCR feature in the Digital Library to support keyword searches within compound objects.
 - The assessment was completed in fall 2021. We added the OCR feature to collections of all text images but have not addressed collections of mixed text and manuscript items.

6. Unit Annual Goals for FY2023

Improve access to materials in archival and manuscript collections (SD1b: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Complete the barcoding and rehousing project for our archival collections.

- Continue efforts to improve access and preservation conditions for unusually sized materials in several large archival collections.
- Continue to increase physical and intellectual control over the content of our oversized flat materials in archival collections.
- Complete the small collections rehousing project.
- Complete processing and ingest for the COVID-19 collecting project materials and the Illinois Field Notes in collaboration with Preservation Services and make these materials available in the Digital Library.
- Add to our digital collection of Illinois County Atlases in the digital library to increase remote access to these resources. Collaborate with Digitization Services, RBML, and the Map Library as needed.

Refine and improve procedures for acquisitions and collection development (SD1a: "Implement sustainable approaches to collection development policies"; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Finalize a collection development policy for IHLC.
- Finalize a collection statement, or series of statements, for our web archives collections.
- Continue to refine processes and procedures for information gathering and assessment of prospective donations of print or manuscript materials.

Continue to refine our use of technologies and digital systems to support public services and access to our collections (SD1b: "Optimize discovery of, and access to..."; SD3c: "Provide access to collections...")

- Continue to implement new workflows for Aeon to better serve researcher needs.
- Assess limitations and potential improvements to the Digital Library for access to our digital collections.
- Assist other units in the library with the implementation of Aeon and improvement of workflows.
- Implement box-level requesting from Archon using data from our barcoding project.
- Assess ways to clarify the special collections request process through Aeon for prospective researchers.

7. Support needed for these specific goals & the unit's overall mission (training, facility needs, IT, etc.)

The greatest need is consistent staffing support. During FY22, IHLC continued to have only one full-time employee and no permanent hourly wage budget. Hourly wage support is critical for fulfilling the goals of the IHLC, as well as maintaining basic unit operations. 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.

Also key is support from Preservation Services and Library IT for our digitization efforts, improvements to digital systems to facilitate greater access to our collections, and our ongoing needs for preservation assessment, consultation, and treatment for our physical holdings.

8. Number of Graduate Assistants/Hourly

FTE:

- Graduate assistants: 0.55
- Graduate hourly: (approximately 0.5 FTE for summer 2021, 0.2 FTE for fall, 0.25 FTE for spring, and 1.25 FTE for summer 2022)

Head count:

- Graduate assistants: 2
- Graduate hourly: 1 for summer 2021; 0 (not double counting the GAs) for fall 2021 and spring 2022; 2 for summer 2022

9. Funding sources for Graduate Assistants/Hourly

Graduate assistants:

- State funds: 0.25 FTE
- Gift funds: 0.3 FTE

Graduate hourly:

- State funds: 0.375 FTE (summer)
- Endowment funds: 0.25 FTE (academic year)

10. Major Responsibilities and Contributions Made by GAs

Graduate assistants:

- Arranged and described 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.
- Created metadata and composed collection descriptions for digitized materials to go into the Digital Library.
- Helped select and review archival materials for digitization.
- Contributed to the assessment of potential new acquisitions.
- Composed social media posts to promote Illinois history and the IHLC on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and the IHLC blog.
- Provided reference services to on-site and remote researchers.
- Curated a “pop-up” exhibit for the IHLC reading room.
- Presented on aspects of the CIJCA to local and non-local Jewish organizations over Zoom.

II. Statistical Profile

1. Facilities

User seating (reduced due to the pandemic and social distancing):

- 2 seats in the reading room

Hours:

- Summer II 2021: open by appointment only, Monday-Thursday, 10am-12pm, and Monday-Friday, 2-4pm
- Fall 2021: 1-5pm, Monday-Friday for walk-ins (20 hours/week); mornings (9am-12pm) by appointment only
- Spring 2022: 9am-12pm and 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (35 hours/week)
- Summer I 2022: 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (20 hours/week); mornings (9am-12pm) by appointment only

2. Personnel

Professional staff (1 FTE total)

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

Academic Hourly Staff (about 0.62 FTE)

- Jessie Knoles (full year): 0.62 FTE
- Calla Sundin (May-June 2021): 0.23 FTE

Graduate Assistants (0.55 FTE total for the academic year)

- Rachel Tomei (August 2021-May 2022): academic year at 0.25 FTE
- Dana Miller (August 2021-May 2022): academic year at 0.3 FTE

Extra Help Staff (0-0.49 FTE, varying by semester)

- Claire Weibel (July 2021): 0.24 FTE
- Courtney Smith (July-December 2021): 0.25 FTE
- Hailey Vasquez (starting June 2022, 0.25 FTE)

Hourly wage budget

- \$4,824 for 15 hours/week (0.375 FTE) of summer grad hourly support.
- IHLC did not receive an official student wage budget allocation for FY22; IHLC covered student wages (about 0.24 FTE grad hourly and 0.37 FTE student hourly) with endowment funds in exchange for additional central support for a significant acquisition of an Abraham Lincoln manuscript.
- The John Thompson Endowment supported approximately 0.3 FTE of additional student hourly support for fall 2021 and spring 2022.
- Barcoding project funding supported about 0.13 FTE of student hourly for fall 2021, spring 2022, and summer 2022, plus a very small amount of grad hourly and student hourly for the initial pilot and planning in summer 2021.

3. User Services

Gate Count/Head Count (extrapolation from Sweeps week)

- Fall: 14 visits/week
- Spring: 6 visits/week
- Total: 320 visits

Reading room use count (Internal statistics from Aeon)

- Fall: 37 research visits* total
- Spring: 33 research visits* total
- Annual count: 96 research visits* total (includes summer and winter break)

*Research visit statistics come from the Aeon reading room report; only includes those requesting and using our collection materials in the reading room

Circulation

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

Aeon statistics for reading room check outs (non-circulating materials used in our reading room):

| Status in Aeon | Books and other print materials | Manuscript collections | Total |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Faculty/Staff | 2 | 13 | 15 |
| RBML Staff | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Graduate | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Undergraduate | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| Other/None | 47 | 38 | 85 |
| Total | 67 | 60 | 127 |

Internal statistics for retrieval requests:

| Requests for: | Books and other print materials | Manuscript collections | Unknown type | Total |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Researchers | 101 | 132 | 5 | 238 |
| Staff use for reference questions | 45 | 29 | 0 | 74 |
| Subtotal (researchers and reference Qs) | 146 | 161 | 5 | 312 |
| Staff use for outreach events/projects | 67 | 49 | 0 | 116 |
| Internal staff use (e.g., processing) | 70 | 147 | 1 | 218 |
| Staff use unspecified | 19 | 45 | 0 | 64 |
| Subtotal (IHLC staff) | 156 | 241 | 1 | 398 |
| Total | 302 | 402 | 6 | 710 |

Reference interactions (from DeskTracker, as reported during FY22 Sweeps Weeks)

- Fall: 15 total/week (7 email, 7 in-person, 1 phone)
- Spring: 9 total/week (3 in-person, 6 phone)
- Annual extrapolation: 384

Presentations (from the Instructional Statistics database)

- Number of presentations to groups online: 1
- Number of participants to groups online: 38

4. Other Statistics

Archival processing (internal statistics)

Work completed to improve access to archival collections in our Manuscript Collections Database (Archon) during FY22, arranged by type of work completed:

| Type of processing work completed | Number of collections |
|--|-----------------------|
| New in archon (added this fiscal year) | 53 |
| New in archon (collections that were in Archon previously but with an empty scope note) | 8 |
| Now published (previously hidden; now open with few changes to original description, etc.) | 5 |
| Revisions to scope note (this includes both extensive and minor edits) | 75 |
| Added inventory (collections without an attached PDF finding aid previously) | 7 |
| Revised inventory (includes inventories with updated, more accessible formatting) | 33 |
| Total | 158 |

Note: some collections had multiple types of work completed and will appear in more than one category. The total represents the total collections added, updated, or edited during this fiscal year.

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 June 30, 2021 | As of July 1, 2022 | Net Change |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Descriptions that are publicly available in Archon | 92.6% (1,009 collections) | 93.7% (1,070 collections) | +61 collections |
| Basic records only (publicly available); no description | 2.1% (23 collections) | 1.4% (16 collections) | -7 collections |
| Draft descriptions, hidden from the public | 4.0% (44 collections) | 3.7% (42 collections) | -2 collections |
| Basic records, hidden from the public | 1.3% (14 collections) | 1.2% (14 collections) | No change |
| Total | 1,090 | 1,142 | +52 collections |

Number of items in Alma by location code

| Location code text description | Location code | Count |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Stacks Non-circulating | ihlc-nc | 34,352 |
| Reference Non-circulating | ihlcr-nc | 127 |
| Maps | ihlcm-nc | 1,049 |
| Oversize | ihlco-nc | 111 |
| Oak Street Vaults | ihlcos | 151 |
| | | 35,790 |