

Illinois History and Lincoln Collections

Annual Report, FY23 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023)

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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, atlases, maps, 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.

1. Major Activities and Accomplishments

During the 2023 fiscal year, IHLC undertook efforts to enhance access to and preservation of documentation of the history of Illinois and its inhabitants in several core areas: collection management to improve access and preservation of materials especially in advance of the upcoming move to a new building, collection development especially in the area of enhancing the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives, and furthering remote access to our materials for researchers across the country and the world, particularly through digitization projects. We also continued to provide strong support for individual researchers in our reading room and remotely.

- Collection management to improve access and preservation: We made significant progress on the barcoding project for archival materials, and also leveraged this to improve the requesting and retrieval processes within Archon for researchers and staff. We began a barcoding project for books and made significant progress -- work that has also helped identify uncatalogued or poorly cataloged materials. We also continued work on our access, rehousing, and description project for our periodical holdings to improve researcher and staff access to these materials.
- Enhancing the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives: During FY23, we acquired two additional collections of records, as well as additions to collections established in prior fiscal years. In addition, we began an oral history project. We hired our former GA into an academic hourly position for the summer, and she conducted four interviews by the end of June 2023.
- Research support: IHLC hosted 54 researchers in our reading room for over 110 total research visits. We assisted 146 researchers via email (not counting those with only basic logistical questions or inquiries related to donations or acquisitions) and also coordinated the completion of 55 digitization requests, mostly for reference-quality PDFs, to support remote access.
- Furthering remote access: We undertook a major initiative to assess our collection of county atlases and plat books for further digitization. The digital collection has nearly doubled in size.

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. The ratings from the algorithms in the eClimate notebook system used for tracking and evaluating the preservation qualities of the spaces' environmental conditions have not been as

troubling as in past years, but 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 (out of a three-level rating scale: "good," "ok," and "risk"). Two were rated as “ok” in the algorithm for mechanical damage, with the remaining one rated as “risk.”

3. Significant Changes

The most significant change in FY23 were in the area of personnel with regard to in the number of part-time employees (mostly students). Due to increased emphasis on making progress on the barcoding project, the number of undergraduate student assistants increased from 3 in academic year 2021-2022 to a high of 6 in spring 2023. At the height in spring 2023, IHLC had 10 part-time employees.

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. We assist researchers both in person and remotely via email and phone.
- During the 2023 fiscal year, the IHLC fulfilled 55 requests for images of materials for 42 patrons.

Student success

- IHLC offers opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience working in archives and special collections. In FY23, three of IHLC’s undergraduate student employees also enrolled in HIST 398: Internship in Public History.

Instructional services

- IHLC’s two graduate assistants collaborated on an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) presentation for spring 2023 titled “‘Simple Work’: New Deal Work Relief in Central Illinois.”

Facility management

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

Scholarly communications and publishing

- Responded to 4 requests for permissions to publish photographs and other materials from IHLC.

Collection access and management

- IHLC led the development, refinement, and implementation of a central landing page for accessing all instances of Archon to support cross-unit searches for archives and manuscript materials (archon.library.illinois.edu). This page is also linked from the library gateway to better support discovery of archival materials by students, faculty, and other researchers.
- Acquisitions: Some highlights from FY23 included several Civil War collections of diaries and/or letters (purchases) and the records from Temple B’nai Abraham in Decatur (donation).
- Preservation: The main conservation and collections care projects for FY23 were rehousing a set of glass plate negatives and assessments for mold remediation and future rehousing projects.

- 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 continued through FY23. Efforts to verify barcoding of our print collection began in spring 2023 and continued through the summer.

Digital Content Creation

- Over the course of FY23, Digitization Services digitized over two dozen atlases as well as archival materials from 11 different collections. This included 2 photograph albums, an architectural drawing, an autobiographical text, and a collection of letters for the Digital Library. Digitization Services also digitized 2 IHLC items to be deposited into IDEALS upon request of the authors.
- In addition, 2 books were digitized for patrons through the Internet Archive scanning center.
- IHLC collaborated with Digital Reformatting Coordinator to provide digital access to the contents of 5 reels of microfilm for patrons.

Organizational development and training

- The Archives Program Officer continued to create documentation and provide assistance for the use of the Aeon request system in Digitization Services and the University Archives.

Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Over the course of FY23, two new collections were added to our Manuscript Collections database documenting Jewish life in central Illinois, plus additions to several others.
- IHLC conducted a session in July 2022 for the University's iExplore program for middle and high school youth in the community. The session focused on personal contemporary reactions to the assassination to Abraham Lincoln and also included an activity of writing present-day postcards.

Outreach and Public Engagement

- IHLC installed two exhibits: a short-term "pop-up" exhibit in fall 2022 titled "From Free Soil to Free Silver: U.S. Political Parties of the 19th Century," and a full exhibit for spring and summer 2023 titled "'Pulling It All Together': Jewish Community Advocacy, Activism, and Fellowship in Central Illinois, 1959-1984."
- In February 2023, IHLC held an open house event to commemorate Abraham Lincoln's birthday.
- IHLC's GA for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives (CIJCA) presented to two external groups (the Champaign County Genealogical Society and the Champaign-Urbana Jewish Federation) over Zoom about the collections available for research at IHLC as part of the CIJCA.
- IHLC's two graduate assistants represented the IHLC and CIJCA at the Archives Bazaar hosted by the Urbana Free Library in October 2022.
- IHLC staff published five blog posts featuring topics represented in our collections, our pop-up exhibit on political parties, and one "#SmallTownSaturday" post.
- The IHLC continued to engage with followers on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, although posts have been less frequent than in past years. Our followers have increased both Instagram and Facebook (as of August 23, 2023, 621 on Instagram, and 650 on Facebook). Our followers have decreased on Twitter/X (to 717 as of August 23, 2023).

5. Progress on Unit Annual Goals for FY2023

Improve access to materials in archival and manuscript collections

- IHLC staff were able to bring the barcoding and rehousing project for our archival collections to approximately 90% completion by the end of FY23.
- We continued our efforts to improve access and preservation conditions for (1) small collections; (2) unusually sized materials; and (3) oversized flat materials in archival collections by completing the rehousing of the small collections, barcoding and describing framed items, developing rehousing plans for our artifact collection, and labeling flat file folders and drawers.
- We have not completed the processing and ingest for the COVID-19 collecting project materials and the Illinois Field Notes in collaboration with Preservation Services as originally planned.
- We added 25 atlases to our digital collection of Illinois County Atlases in the digital library, and conducted an assessment of dozens more for potential digitization.

Refine and improve procedures for acquisitions and collection development

- Due to other projects, in particular those connected to the building project, taking priority, we did not finalize a collection development policy for IHLC during FY23 as originally planned.
- We drafted several documents defining the scope and goals of web archiving collections, particularly for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Web Archive but also more broadly.
- We continued 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

- IHLC continued to coordinate with colleagues in RBML, Digitization Services, and University Archives to refine Aeon workflows as well as to improve its usability for researchers.
- The Archives Program Officer proposed additional improvements to the Digital Library and collaborated on planning for user testing planned for fall 2023.
- IHLC successfully implemented box-level requesting from Archon using data from our barcoding project and added it to RBML's Archon and to the staff view for University Archives as well.

6. Unit Annual Goals for FY2023

- Complete the barcoding projects for both print and archival materials.
- Continue working to establish greater physical and intellectual control over unprocessed archival and print materials prior to moving to the new building.
- Take steps toward finalizing a collection policy by the time we move to the new building.
- Continue to build the historic county atlases collection in the Digital Library to provide broader research access to these resources.
- Continue to collaborate with colleagues to study the usability of the Digital Library platform to enhance user access to our digitized materials.
- Establish groundwork to reclassify IHLC atlases and plat books from Dewey to LC to support improved access and retrieval (LC provides a more logical order for geographical materials).
- Launch our oral history website to provide integrated access to recordings and transcriptions for the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Oral History project.
- Increase undergraduate engagement with IHLC materials through collaborations with classes.

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

The greatest need is consistent staffing support. Hourly wage support as well as the graduate assistant allocation are critical for fulfilling the goals of the IHLC, as well as maintaining basic unit operations. 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 (including funding for supplies).

8. Number of Graduate Assistants/Hourly

FTE:

- Graduate assistants: 0.55
- Graduate hourly: (approximately 1 FTE for summer 2022, 0.53 FTE for the academic year, and 0.5 FTE for summer 2023)

Head count:

- Graduate assistants: 2
- Graduate hourly: 2 for summer 2022; 1 (not double counting the GAs) for fall 2022 and spring 2023; 1 for summer 2023

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 2022); 0.5 FTE (summer 2023)
- Library Advancement funds: 0.33 FTE (academic year)
- IHLC endowment and gift funds: 0.75 FTE (summer 2022); 0.2 FTE (academic year)

10. Major Responsibilities and Contributions Made by GAs

Graduate assistants:

- Arranged and described archival collections; reprocessed existing collections to improve access to materials; reviewed and improved access and preservation for partially processed collections.
- Created metadata and composed collection descriptions for digitized materials to be added to the Digital Collections site and helped select and review archival materials for digitization.
- Contributed to the assessment of potential new acquisitions as well as potential deaccessions.
- Met and corresponded with current and prospective collection donors in collaboration with the Archives Program Officer (for the CIJCA assistantship).
- Provided reference services to on-site and remote researchers.
- Curated exhibits for the IHLC reading room.
- Composed blogs and social media posts to promote Illinois history and the IHLC.

II. Statistical Profile

1. Facilities

User seating:

- 2 seats in the reading room

Hours:

- Summer II 2022: 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (20 hours/week); mornings (9am-12pm) by appointment only
- Fall 2022: 9am-12pm and 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (35 hours/week)
- Spring 2023: 9am-12pm and 1-5pm, Monday-Friday (35 hours/week)
- Summer II 2023: Monday-Friday, 1-5pm (20 hours/week)

2. Personnel

Professional staff (1 FTE total)

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

Academic Hourly Staff (0.26-0.62 FTE total, varying by semester)

- Jessie Knoles (July-March): 0.62 FTE (summer); 0.26 FTE (fall, winter, spring)
- Dana Miller (starting May 2022): 0.5 FTE

Graduate Assistants (0.55 FTE total for the academic year)

- Rachel Tomei (August 2022-May 2023): academic year at 0.25 FTE
- Dana Miller (August 2022-May 2023): academic year at 0.3 FTE

Extra Help Staff (0.25 FTE, summer, fall, and winter)

- Hailey Vasquez (July 2022-January 2023, 0.25 FTE)

Hourly wage budget

- Hourly wage budget of \$10,536.67 (including both fiscal year funding and summer grad hourly funding). Approximately half of this hourly wage budget funded 1 grad hourly position for summer (0.375 FTE in 2022 and 0.5 FTE in 2023), and approximately half funded 2-3 partial student hourly positions during the academic year (totaling 0.3 FTE for fall and 0.2 FTE for spring) and 1 position in summer 2023 (0.34 FTE).
- An additional allocation of \$10,000 in gift funds from Library Advancement funded a graduate hourly employee during the academic year (0.33 FTE).
- Barcoding project funding: During FY23, \$9,080 supported about 593 hours of student hourly work and 51 hours of grad hourly work (0.1 FTE summer 2022, 0.13 FTE fall 2022, 0.68 FTE spring 2023 (split between 0.6 FTE undergrad and 0.08 FTE grad), and 0.49 FTE summer 2023)
- IHLC-managed endowment and gift funds (Horner Endowment, Creamer Endowment, John Thompson Endowment, IHLC Gift Fund, and CIJCA Gift Fund): \$44,898 supported 0.26-0.62 FTE of academic hourly work (July-March and May-June), 0.25 FTE of extra help work (July-January), 0.75 FTE summer graduate hourly work (July-August), 0.2 FTE of graduate hourly work (academic year), and approximately 0.25 FTE of student hourly work (academic year).

3. User Services

Gate Count/Head Count (extrapolation from Sweeps week head counts)

- Fall: 8 visits/week
- Spring: 11 visits/week
- Total: 304 visits

Reading room use count (Internal statistics from Aeon)

- Fall: 34 research visits* total
- Spring: 44 research visits* total
- Annual count: 112 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 and excludes IHLC staff training exercises for Aeon

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	15	33	48
Graduate	8	13	21
Undergraduate	1	6	7
Other/None	3	26	29
Total	27	78	105

Aeon statistics for retrieval requests (items or boxes paged):

Requests for:	Books and other print materials	Manuscript collections	Total
Researchers	83	151	234
Staff use for reference questions	28	37	65
Subtotal (researchers and reference Qs)	111	188	299
Staff use for outreach events/projects	26	48	74
Internal staff use (e.g., processing)	180	99	279
Staff use unspecified	32	22	54
Subtotal (IHLC staff)	238	169	407
Total	349	357	706

Reference interactions (from DeskTracker, as reported during FY23 Sweeps Weeks)

- Fall: 19 total/week (8 email, 10 in-person, 1 phone)
- Spring: 7 total/week (1 email, 5 in-person, 1 phone)
- Annual extrapolation: 416

Presentations

- Number of presentations to groups (synchronous): 2
- Number of presentations to groups (asynchronous): 0
- Number of participants in group presentations (synchronous): 23

- Number of participants in group presentations (asynchronous): n/a

4. Other Statistics

Archival processing (internal statistics)

Work completed to improve access to archival collections in our Manuscript Collections Database (Archon) during FY23, arranged by type of work completed:

Type of processing work completed	Number of collections
New in archon (added this fiscal year)	29
New in archon (collections that were in Archon previously but with an empty scope note)	1
Now published (previously hidden; now open with few changes to original description, etc.)	2
Revisions to scope note (this includes both extensive and minor edits)	43
Added inventory (collections without an attached PDF finding aid previously)	4
Revised inventory (includes inventories with updated, more accessible formatting)	24
Total	101

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, 2022	As of July 1, 2023	Net Change
Descriptions that are publicly available in Archon	93.7% (1,070 collections)	92.6% (1,084 collections)	+14 collections
Basic records only (publicly available); no description	1.4% (16 collections)	2.5% (29 collections)	+13 collections
Draft descriptions, hidden from the public	3.7% (42 collections)	3.8% (45 collections)	+3 collections
Basic records, hidden from the public	1.2% (14 collections)	1.1% (13 collections)	-1 collection
Total	1,142	1,171	+29 collections

Items added to Alma by item type

Item type	Count
Book	114
Issue	71
Map	2
Video cassette	3
Total	172