

New Service Model Proposal

Proposal

This proposal seeks to examine the best mechanisms for sustaining the services offered by the Illinois History and Lincoln Collections (IHLC) and supporting the ongoing management of that unit within the context of the University Library.

Rationale

As the University Library looks forward to delivering services in the coming years, the need to examine many of the operational models currently employed throughout the Library has become apparent. The Illinois History and Lincoln Collections (IHLC) represent a unique strength at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, both in terms of its collections and the expertise provided by its resident scholar. The IHLC holds rich resources related to the study of state and local history, rare book and manuscript materials related to the history of the State of Illinois, and unique artifacts from Abraham Lincoln.

Currently, IHLC collection of print materials is non-circulating. And, the unit is unable to dedicate appropriate human resources to consistently manage the unit's extensive manuscript collections, maps and other resources. Although extensive work had been completed by the IHLC personnel in enhancing and developing electronic versions of its finding aids, the IHLC's ability to deliver these finding aides online was realized with an initial financial commitment from the University Library's Office of Collections and commitments of additional professional expertise from other units within the Special Collections Division. As this initial commitment of resources was wrapping up, the IHLC continued the work begun under this arrangement with the support of funds under its own management. This need for the unit to rely upon contributions of time and effort from other units extends to the curatorial care of its map collections, with the Map Library currently planning to incorporate the processing of the IHLC map backlog into its workflow.

The circumstances that required these commitments of time and effort from other units stem largely from a lack of human resources in the IHLC, not from a lack of desire to deliver service. It is our belief that the IHLC is a unique resource scholars and students both on this campus and afield. It is also our belief that this resource could become a more significant entity within the University Library. However, it is not going to achieve that goal without an objective exploration of its services and administrative operation within the broader context of the University Library.

The objectives for this NSM working group are two-fold. First, the University Library seeks to identify and detail how to best deliver the services offered by the IHLC in the coming years. Second, the University Library seeks input on the most effective administrative models for managing and overseeing the IHLC's operations. To that end, this charge seeks recommendations on how the services and collections currently in the IHLC can be best delivered to our patrons and most effectively managed to meet the needs of our users.