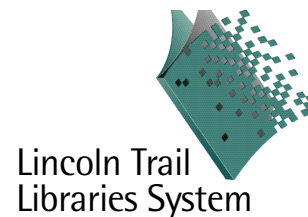


# NEWS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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### **Diversity: A Two-Way Street for Librarians**

Lincoln Trail Libraries System (LTLS) has been awarded a grant to promote diversity and cultural competencies in rural libraries. This initiative extends from Central Illinois to the Southern tip of the state. It is a two-way street where librarians will improve their outreach to the increasingly diverse populations in Central and Southern Illinois, and community organizations and agencies will become aware of how librarians can assist them in providing services to the culturally diverse and underserved populations. Librarians are invited to attend an array of events that will promote cultural awareness and cross-cultural mutual respect and understanding.

"Libraries Building Bridges with Communities" is a one-day forum that will be held in Effingham in the spring of 2006. The diversity forum will deal with inter-cultural communication, tolerance of different beliefs, development of a diverse book collection, and how service organizations can network to better serve our growing diverse communities. LTLS will also provide two cultural competency workshops to be held in Decatur and Mount Vernon. These are thought provoking workshops that will help participants gain a better understanding of our cultural history and the culture of race in the United States.

LTLS has identified poverty as a factor in diversity. Poverty is a major barrier to full participation in community and social events, hindering a person's ability to enjoy what others take for granted. According to census data, all counties in Illinois include segments that live at or below the poverty line. Lincoln Trail Libraries System is partnering with the University of Illinois Extension Office to provide two "Poverty Simulator" workshops that are designed to raise awareness through role-play, helping participants to better understand and serve the poor.

Librarians will also learn a new language; since the Latino population is the fastest growing population in Illinois, librarians will take classes in basic Spanish, enabling them to communicate with their Latino patrons.

Immigrants have also been identified as part of a diverse population that gives our culture its richness. Librarians will offer "I Am An American" programs where immigrants will share their stories of coming to the United States and what it personally means to them to become a U.S. citizen. Presentations will be open to the public and will be hosted by several libraries across Illinois.

The Diversity and Cultural Competency in Rural Libraries Grant has been awarded by the Illinois State Library, a Division of the Office of Secretary of State, under the federal Library Services and Technology Act.

Founded in 1966, Lincoln Trail Libraries System has headquarters in Champaign and is one of the 9 multitype library systems in the State of Illinois. System funding is provided by the Office of Secretary of State and the State Librarian Jesse White. LTLS serves 7 academic, 53 public, 45 school, and 17 special libraries in Champaign, Clark, Coles, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Piatt, and Vermilion counties. Lincoln Trail advocates, collaborates, and facilitates education and cooperation to empower information agencies to improve and expand access to and delivery of information resources.