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Institute to teach librarians how to branch out from books

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Libraries aren't just for books and reading anymore. Nor should librarians limit themselves to the book.

That's the premise behind a new institute that is the brainchild of Illinois State Library director Anne Craig and includes staff and faculty members from the University of Illinois Springfield.

The initiative aims to help librarians throughout the state take advantage of web technologies that foster community participation and develop leadership and innovation.

"One of the most significant things is to reframe the way we look at how people use the library," said Dean Jane Treadwell, university librarian at UIS. "You can think of the library more as an entity you can interact with."

The institute, called ILEAD (Illinois Libraries Explore, Apply and Discover) U: the 21st Century Technology Tools Institute for Illinois Library Staff, is funded by a \$142,000 Laura Bush 21st century Librarian Program Grant awarded to the state library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The grant was one of 33 made nationwide by the Laura Bush program.

The institute will help library staff respond to patron needs by using such as blogging; digital audio/podcasting, photography and video; RSS feeds; social networking and photo-sharing sites; videoconferencing and web conferencing; virtual reference and virtual worlds; gaming and instant messaging.

"The UIS library has all kinds of users," Treadwell said. "We have to be able to reach out to all these students."

The institute consists of three in-person sessions from Feb. 23 to 25, June 15 to 17 and Oct. 26 to 28 on the UIS campus. The sessions will be supplemented by online instruction between meeting dates.

Treadwell said nine or 10 teams of librarians will be coming to UIS for instruction. Between sessions, the teams will be in contact with mentors and instructors, all web technology experts.

"The teams will be from all types of libraries from throughout the state, although the majority of them are from public libraries," she said.

Lincoln Library and Benedictine University also are represented.

Treadwell said using technology isn't the kind of thing somebody learns all at once.

"It requires changing your frame of reference," Treadwell said. "The goal is that all the teams that participate will feel proficient in using new technology, then will teach others."

Library educator R. David Lankes of Syracuse University will lead the instructors for the project.

Treadwell is chairing the steering committee that selected the instructors, mentors and teams of participants and will guide the work of the project.

Other UIS participants include Natalie Tagge, visiting instructional services librarian at Brookens Library, and two other Brookens librarians, Pamela Salela and Amanda Binder.

Additionally, Ray Schroeder and Shari Smith of the Center for Online Learning, Research and Service (COLRS) are consultants to the instructors for the project, and David Racine of the Institute for Legal, Legislative and Policy Studies will direct the evaluation of the ILEAD U grant.

"We've always enjoyed working with the state library and trying out new things," Treadwell said.

"Nowhere is the need for continuing education more important than in the area of technology," said Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. "Librarians need to constantly enhance their skills to keep up-to-date with the latest technology, and ILEAD U represents an exciting, innovative new program to build technology and leadership skills among Illinois librarians."

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