

ICfL vs. ILA: Two Distinct Organizations -- Both Support Idaho Libraries

By ICfL Library Consultant Kevin Tomlinson

What follows is a brief clarification and summary of the similarities and distinctions between the Idaho Commission for Libraries and the Idaho Library Association. Although both organizations support libraries in Idaho, each in its own way, the missions and structures of the two are quite different.

[The Idaho Commission for Libraries](#) (ICfL) is a state agency, established in 1901, with a mission to assist libraries to build the capacity to better serve their communities. The ICfL employs 37 staff members who work to fulfil this mission through library development, the Talking Book Service, and administration and support. The ICfL is funded with state dollars and federal Library Services and Technology Act ([LSTA](#)) funds administered through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Each state in the nation, along with U.S. Territories, administers LSTA grants to state through a State Library Agency, and the ICfL serves that function for Idaho. The ICfL also accepts contributions from individuals and corporations. As a tax-funded agency, the ICfL does not provide legal advice and does not lobby.

With these funding sources, the ICfL is able to assist Idaho's libraries with many services including broadband access, STEM programming, literacy programs, summer reading support, books for those with physical limitations, book discussion kits and speakers, monetary grants, and vendor discounts for underserved communities. In addition, the ICfL offers resource-sharing and cataloging services, the Libraries Linking Idaho (LILI) databases and services, website solutions for libraries, library development and consulting services for public and school library staff and trustees, the [STACKS] repository, and publications and newsletters designed to inform and educate those working in and supporting libraries. The ICfL sponsors many continuing education opportunities throughout the year including monthly webinars, face-to-face trainings, funding to send library staff and trustees to library-related conferences and for group training events, and also provides grants for those pursuing library science courses. A fact sheet with an overview of services and programs, along with the ICfL contacts for each, may be found at <https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/ICfL-Programs-and-Services-FactSheet-20200615.pdf>.

The Board of Library Commissioners is the designated policymaking body for ICfL. The five commissioners are appointed by Idaho's Governor and include one from the northern part of the state, one from the eastern part of the state, one from the southwestern part of the state, and one from each of the state's two congressional districts.

Idaho Commission for Libraries staff members can share information about the ICfL at board or staff meetings. Public Information Officer Donna Eggers can also answer any question you have about the ICfL over the phone at 208-639-4183 or via email at donna.eggers@libraries.idaho.gov.

The [Idaho Library Association](#) (ILA) was founded in 1915. The Association's activities have varied over the years, but they have always focused on supporting the role of Idaho libraries. ILA's current activities include:

- Maintaining relationships with library leaders and state politicians and policymakers
- Scholarships for Idaho librarians to pursue advanced educational opportunities
- Library professional development activities across the state
- Leadership development programs
- Opportunities for librarian networking, collaboration, and communication
- Working with a legislative liaison to monitor and advocate for library legislation

Each year during the first week of October, the ILA hosts its Annual Conference. This is an opportunity for library staff and trustees to attend informative sessions, network with colleagues from other organizations, meet and talk to Idaho legislators, learn from carefully selected keynote speakers about topics important to libraries, and interact with vendors of goods and services of interest to libraries.

In addition to its Annual Conference, the ILA hosts regional spring conferences around the state, providing additional opportunities for learning, sharing, and networking.

The ILA also offers [LibIdaho](#), a free email discussion list for people interested in all aspects of libraries and librarianship in Idaho. Membership is not limited to librarians, Idaho residents, or ILA members, but the list will probably be of greatest interest and value to those who are working in libraries in Idaho.

Each year, the Idaho Library Association presents its Idaho Library Awards, including:

- Idaho Public Library of the Year
- Librarian of the Year
- Trustee of the Year
- School Librarian of the Year
- Library Friend of the Year
- Legislator of the Year
- Special Services to Libraries Award
- Paraprofessional of the Year
- Book of the Year Award

ILA also sponsors two annual \$600 scholarships for those pursuing formal education opportunities.

Contact the ILA at: <http://www.idaholibraries.org/contact>.

The ILA is always looking for people who are interested in supporting the organization by volunteering to serve on a committee or by supporting the organization with membership dues.