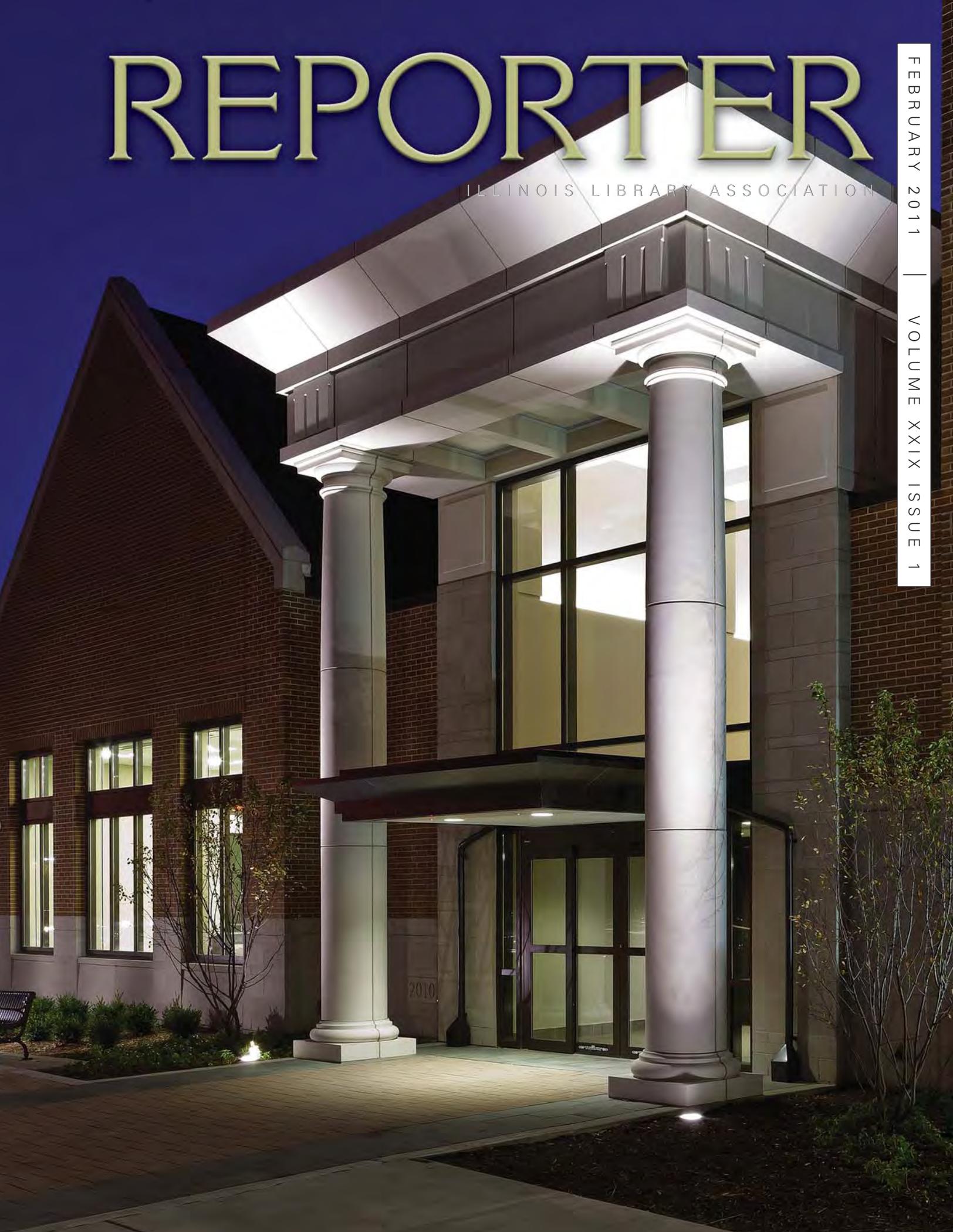


REPORTER

ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Photograph by ballogphoto.com



This is the fourteenth in a series of articles highlighting new library buildings or additions. Each year we feature noteworthy academic, school, special, or public libraries whose innovative concepts merit attention.

Please send suggestions for future library features to ILA, 33 W. Grand Ave., Suite 301, Chicago, IL 60654; phone: (312) 644-1896; fax: (312) 644-1899; e-mail: doyle@ila.org.

Fox Lake District Library



In orientation and form the new Fox Lake District Library literally welcomes users with open arms, its exterior angles recalling an open book and expressing one of the facility's main purposes.

Located at 255 East Grand Avenue in Fox Lake, the 45,000-square-foot facility utilizes a selection of exterior materials and textures that, with the building's massing, express one of the library board's design philosophies: in aspect the facility should offer both a welcoming embrace and an expression of aspiration and possibility. The architect's extensive use of brick and a rough quarried sandstone in entry and pedestrian areas imparts a traditional feel, while the transition in the building's soaring lines and entryway to sleek modern materials such as glass, smooth resin panels, and extruded aluminum speaks to the future.

An arc of illuminated oval bollards and pedestrian scaled "torch" luminaires distinguish the entry plaza, welcoming users during the library's dusk and nighttime hours.

Typically busy areas of a modern public library are concentrated on the facility's main floor, with the children's room, circulation, and audiovisual areas united by a central lobby floored with ribbons of terrazzo that on sunny days delight the eye with a sprinkling of nacreous abalone chips. The double height entry created by a surrounding stairway invites users to the second

floor adult services area. Patrons mounting the stairs cross a broad terrazzo landing under large lantern style light fixtures that draw the eye upward to a cherry wood lobby ceiling.

The architect's use of natural light is a distinguishing aspect of the library's design. Large expanses of glass on the building's northern exposure and use of fritted and tinted glass allow natural light to enter the building while minimizing glare, heat gain, and utility costs. A row of clerestory windows above the main second floor roof illuminates the adult services area while enhancing the visual interest of the building's second level.

The library's interiors largely utilize warm color schemes and emphasize comfortable seating, with forty-six upholstered chairs distributed through lounge, periodical browsing, and quiet reading areas. Soft chairs with tablet arms facilitate laptop use while power and data plug-ins are liberally scattered through the building, with many positioned below study tables for convenience of users.

A much-discussed feature of the library's interior is the "symphony bench," an enticing wave of formed cherry wood rectangles united by sleek chrome legs. Centered under clerestory windows that bisect the library's upper level, opposite the adult services desk, the bench is occasionally mistaken for a work of art and inspires a frequent question: "Can we sit on it?" The answers is, "Yes!"

A "tree" theme realized in the children's department is among the unique decorative elements of the facility. Large molded glass panels create a tree image in doors giving access to the children's area from the library's main lobby. Laser cutouts in oak, ginkgo, and aspen leaf patterns adorn the backs of twenty-six contoured maple children's room study chairs.

This theme is continued in the children's department with a large "story tree" surrounded by bench seating, crafted by wood artisans as an homage to a much-loved papier-mâché tree that had sheltered generations of young readers in the library's prior facility. This fantasy tree is centered in an undulating cove of low easy book shelving that creates an air of privacy and quiet, and is bedecked with whimsical colored birds that delight both preschoolers and their parents.



The imaginations of young readers are further stimulated by unique suspended decorative canopies in translucent lime and cerulean that ribbon overhead in the children's room, echoing blue and green highlights in the area's carpeting.

Other elements of its design emphasize the library's role as a gathering place and cultural nexus of the community. A 125-seat public meeting room welcomes local, nonprofit organizations as a comfortable meeting place equipped with the latest audiovisual equipment. Off the lobby, a fourteen-seat café provides a welcoming oasis for patrons using the facility for extended periods. The library's traditional role as a refuge of solace and intellectual possibility is reflected in a cantilevered second floor quiet reading room that is flooded with natural light.

The library's written building program stresses that its design should express the facility's importance in the civic, educational, and cultural life of the community. The library board, staff, and community of users feel that the architect has achieved this important directive through distinguished sitting, thoughtful materials selection, and elegant planning of spaces in the new Fox Lake District Library facility.



Fast Facts

Building:	45,000 square feet
Project Costs:	\$15,573,590
Seating:	223
Collections:	Books: 67,653 Audio books: 3,093 Music: 2,265 DVDs and video: 4,150 Magazines and newspapers: 277
Computers:	Adult public: 24 Express Internet: 2 Reference database: 2 Children's: 9 OPAC: 7 Laptops: 16 Staff: 37
Hours:	72 per week (school year); 68 (summer)
Staff:	23
Architect:	PSA-Dewberry/BCA Architects
Project Manager:	Michael Mackey
Engineers:	Larson Engineering (structural) McClure Engineering (civil) Metro Design (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection)
Building Program:	Richard E. Thompson
Interiors:	Sara Chrzanowski, IIDA, PSA-Dewberry/BCA Architects
Construction:	A. J. Maggio Co.
Owner's Representative:	Norman J. Eallonardo
Web site:	www.fllib.org