

Illinois State University Circus & Allied Arts Collection Fellowship

Milner Library will award fellowship(s) of \$1,500.00 to selected scholars interested in researching any topic that requires the onsite use of the Circus & Allied Arts Collection at Illinois State University. Founded in 1955, this collection initially documented the important relationship that existed between the twin cities of Bloomington-Normal and circus acts throughout modern history. Bloomington was a popular winter training location for numerous aerialists, producing aerial acts such as the “The Flying Fishers,” “The Flying Wards,” and “The Concellos.” Today, the collection is one of the largest collections of circus materials in the country. The collection also includes related arts such as carnivals, carousels, Wild West shows, and vaudeville. Specifically, the collection consists of materials such as books, correspondence, personal papers, periodical holdings, posters, prints, slides, advertising pieces, photographs, films, music scores and recordings, route books, programs, and ledgers. These sources form the foundation of this comprehensive research collection and provide rich context for understanding elements of circus production—including the costuming, marketing, talent acquisition, and staging—as well as investigating the role of circus as entertainment and cultural phenomenon.

The stipend of \$1,500.00 is intended to support costs associated with the selected scholars’ proposed research project, including but not limited to costs of travel, room and board, digital scans, and other expenses related to research in our collection.

Fellowship Requirements

This fellowship is open to all graduate students enrolled in an institution of higher education pursuing a degree at a master’s level or higher, all faculty members employed at an institution of higher education, or researchers or scholars who hold a master’s degree or higher and are currently employed in a cultural heritage institution (e.g., gallery, library, archives, or museum). Current Illinois State University students and faculty members are not eligible for this award. Successful awardees must complete a project investigating any aspect of the Circus & Allied Arts Collection. The final research project (dissertation, journal article, book, etc.) must acknowledge support from Illinois State University and reference the Circus & Allied Arts Collection Fellowship. A print or digital copy of the completed scholarly work must be offered to Illinois State University for deposit in Milner Library’s collections. The awardees will submit a two-page report on their research within thirty days of completing their visit and offer a research presentation to Milner Library personnel within one year after completing their visit. The presentation may be conducted virtually.

Application Process

Please submit application materials by January 5, 2024, for onsite visits planned for spring or summer 2024, or by May 3, 2024, for onsite visits planned for Fall 2024. To apply, please submit:

- A letter of application
- A curriculum vitae of no more than 5 pages

- A description of your project that addresses how research in the Circus & Allied Arts Collection will advance the project, provides a sample of the items in the collection to be consulted, and includes an anticipated start date.

Application materials must be submitted via e-mail to Rachel Scott, Associate Dean for Information Assets, at rescot2@ilstu.edu. Successful applicants will be notified by letter.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Project must be relevant to the Circus & Allied Arts collection
- Project description articulates well why the collection is necessary for the project
- Project is well defined, with clearly articulated goals and outcome
- Project represents original research and demonstrates originality/creativity

Please contact Maureen Brunsdale, head of special collections at mbruns1@ilstu.edu, for additional information regarding the Circus & Allied Arts Collection.

Note: Research must be based primarily in the Circus & Allied Arts collection, but you are welcome and encouraged to take advantage of all Milner Library collections.

IMPORTANT: Submission of an application to this fellowship grants the Illinois State University and other sponsors the right to announce you as the recipient of the award in their promotional literature and through their web sites and social media.