For everyone here at Illinois Public Media, 2016 was a year of discovery. We explored new ways to connect and collaborate—not just around the state, but across the country. We gave power to the Illinois story through original films. We offered diverse perspectives on local and national issues. We continued to grow our partnership with WTVP in Peoria. We delivered balanced, fair, and non-partisan election coverage. We empowered local citizens through debates and voter guides. We equipped local schools and children with innovative tools to develop critical skills. And we quite literally traveled the world with the Friends of WILL.

Throughout, we remained true to our foundation: Providing you with high-quality journalism, arts programs, classical music performances, agricultural news, gardening expertise, and educational materials. And I believe these to be the cornerstones of what makes us such a remarkable community resource.

Now, more than ever, it is critical we fulfill our mission to enrich the lives of those in our community through the power of public media. For Illinois Public Media, this means being a trusted media organization that provides a platform for differing opinions to come together as part of a healthy democracy while also inspiring lifelong learning through access to arts and culture.

A sincere thank you to you, the Friends of WILL, for making it all possible.

Moss Bresnahan
President and CEO

2016 at a glance

Reach

15,007 listeners stream WILL Radio each month

WILL-FM is the only on-air source for opera in central Illinois

2 annual WILL Ag Conferences more than 500 attendees

2,944 WILL Ag followers

Support

Friends in 673 zipcodes spanning 37 states

Cut the minutes spent in radio pledge by 56%

$2.8 million in Estate Gifts

$2.2 million annual gifts from Friends

Friends gift levels

Private grants totalling $243,000

Total donors 11,469

Engagement

2 web series

14 episodes

7,893 views

2 Telly Awards

9,751 subscribers

40 Book Mentors gave out 5,600 books in 43 Head Start classrooms

Illinois Radio Reader

More than 500 users

More than 50 volunteers

Content: 80 hours a week
In March, Illinois Public Media launched a new hour-long, daily talk show **The 21st**, exploring news, culture, and stories that matter to Illinois. In addition to WILL-AM, three other public media stations across the state currently air **The 21st**. The WILL Newsroom also welcomed **Illinois Edition**, WUIS’ capital city news magazine, to the WILL-AM midday lineup.

Illinois Public Media was one of 14 public media stations nationwide to host **Re:Dream** conversations around the idea of the American dream. Niala Boodhoo, host of **The 21st**, talked with children at the Boys and Girls Club of Danville about **Re:Dream**.

During an atypical election year, **Voter’s Edge Illinois** provided local citizens with a free, nonpartisan, online guide for voters. This was made possible through a partnership with MapLight.

**WILL-FM** also entered into a nationwide collaborative spanning 23 stations, known as **Classical Music Rising**. Stations are working together to carve a new path for classical music to keep it relevant in an ever-changing public media environment.

In the spring, **Illinois Newsroom** was awarded a $200,000 grant from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation to strengthen its digital journalism model and regional engagement efforts. And in October, WILL’s Scott Cameron accepted the Executive Editor position to lead this statewide, seven-station journalism collaborative.

**The 21st** brought the **Re:Dream** project to the Multicultural Community Center in Rantoul and the Boys and Girls Club of Danville to ask people of all ages and backgrounds what it means to “make it” in the 21st century. **The 21st** produced two radio specials sharing the stories of those they met.

In the spring, **Illinois Newsroom** was awarded a $200,000 grant from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation to strengthen its digital journalism model and regional engagement efforts. And in October, WILL’s Scott Cameron accepted the Executive Editor position to lead this statewide, seven-station journalism collaborative.

**Prairie Performances**, airing Friday nights at 7 pm on WILL-FM, spotlights performances from 11 area orchestras.
In celebration of the 18th Annual Roger Ebert’s Film Festival came Ebertfest 2016: Center of the Universe, a documentary covering the life and legacy of Roger Ebert and the history of the festival, as well as providing a short preview of Ebertfest 2016.

Barns are practical. They store equipment, keep animals safe, and speak to our state’s agricultural impact. The documentary Barns: An Illinois Story reveals the history and ponders the future of these iconic structures that dot our landscape.

For the second year in a row ART/BTS was an award-winning web series, bringing home a Silver Telly in Videography/Cinematography and a Bronze Telly in the Web Series category.

Illinois Public Media also launched a new production initiative with the goal of bringing Illinois to the world and the world to Illinois. Our National and International Productions team played a critical role in getting the films Stephen Hawking’s Favorite Places and All The Queen’s Horses to the screen.

Illinois Public Media was proud to bring #BlackScienceMatters to WILL-TV and Facebook. The film series—produced by University of Illinois students under the leadership of journalism professor Charles “Stretch” Ledford—examines the larger pervasive national issue of the severe underrepresentation of African-Americans in the sciences through the lens of individuals’ experiences within the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign community.
Illinois Public Media captured oral histories of local Vietnam veterans and war refugees as a part of the Downstate Vietnam Stories project. With the help of local teachers, these oral histories became lesson plans offered on the Illinois Edition of PBS Learning Media, including both one-day lessons and lengthier units.

Thanks to grants from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois and the Illinois State Library, a donation from Mervis Industries, and proceeds from the Vintage Vinyl sale, Illinois Radio Reader received more than $46,000 in support.

The Book Mentor Project received another year of funding from the PNC Foundation in its 13th year. In addition, advertising students from the College of Media worked closely with Illinois Public Media during the fall semester to create social media and fundraising campaigns tailored around the project.

Empowering communities

Illinois Public Media hosted an Illinois 13th Congressional District debate between incumbent Republican Rodney Davis (back left) and Democratic challenger Mark Wicklund (front left) with moderator Niala Boodhoo (middle back) live in the WILL-TV studio on October 13, 2016.

Plowing Ahead—the latest public radio series to come out of the long-standing partnership between Illinois Public Media and the University of Illinois Laboratory High School (Uni High)—painted a portrait of farming in east central Illinois in the 21st century.

R eaching further

Hanging out at the intersection of sports and culture, Bandwagon enjoyed a successful first season, discussing everything from ping pong to dressage to famous rivalries. It joins other WILL Radio podcast regulars: Legal Issues in the News; Environmental Almanac; The 21st; Commodity Week; and Ag Market Reports.

The Dave Benton Internship was established with a generous gift from Helen Miller. The internship gives students the opportunity to spend time in both WCIA and WILL newsrooms while focusing on digital news production. It joins the Donald P. Mullally Internship on Illinois Public Media’s list of ongoing opportunities for students to work and learn in the WILL Newsroom.

Plowing Ahead—the latest public radio series to come out of the long-standing partnership between Illinois Public Media and the University of Illinois Laboratory High School (Uni High)—painted a portrait of farming in east central Illinois in the 21st century.

From left: John Steinbacher, Lisa Bralts and Brian Moline of Bandwagon.

6 Interns got 2,375 hours of real world experience

Taco & Tech Night—co-hosted by the Book Mentor Project and the Savoy Head Start—taught parents best practices for using technology with children ages 2-5.
Donors often wish to help with a specific need—e.g., new technology or support for a particular type of program, like science, the arts, or children’s education. With two separate estate gifts totaling $2.8 million, Illinois Public Media was able to meet both types of needs in 2016.

Illinois Public Media devoted the Howard Rutan Endowment to support the British programming he loved so much. Because of this thoughtful estate planning, we can continue to bring local viewer favorites such as Call The Midwife, Indian Summers, The Tunnel, and the wide variety of series from Masterpiece.

Illinois Public Media upgraded the audio boards in each of the WILL Radio studios over the summer. These new boards provide higher quality audio for the listener as well as ease of operation for reporters, hosts, and production and technical staff.


Going places

Whether it was to experience the exquisite costumes of Downton Abbey, breathtaking Italian countryside, bountiful gardens of P. Allen Smith, or skyscrapers of Chicago, 179 Friends of WILL traveled across the country and around the world with Illinois Public Media.

Steve Morck, digital media associate producer, runs the new audio board in WILL Radio Master Control.

The New Friend February thank you gift for helping Illinois Public Media put its best foot forward.

Kevin Hinders and Friends stop at the Calder Flamingo on Federal Plaza during the walking tour of Chicago.

Friends of WILL enjoy the breezy front porch of P. Allen Smith’s home during the garden-to-table tour with Mid-American Gardener.
For the second year in a row, we were successful in making more than 100 new Friends during New Friends February. And Illinois Public Media was excited to introduce the all-new member benefit WILL Passport in February as well. Friends now have on-demand access to an extensive library of binge-worthy, quality local and national public television programs, which includes full seasons of many current and past series.

In March, 125 Friends joined us at Allerton Park to bid a fond farewell to *Downton Abbey*. Together we enjoyed afternoon tea with special guest speaker Cele Otnes, Ph.D., followed by a champagne toast and screening of the final episode of this treasured series.

Friends of WILL help ensure we can provide central Illinois with high-quality, regional journalism, unparalleled arts programs, great classical music performances, access to early childhood educational tools, and so much more in 2017.

- WILL KIDS 24/7
- Illinois Newsroom
- From the Stage at Krannert Center
- Reel Midwest