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### **SIU Press shines at Illinois State Historical Society “Best of Illinois History” awards**

CARBONDALE, IL— The Illinois State Historical Society (ISHS) announced the 2023 recipients of its “Best of Illinois History” awards on Saturday, April 29. Southern Illinois University Press took home a total of seven awards, including the Russell P. Strange Book of the Year award, six of the nine awards given in the “Books, Scholarly” category (with Book of the Year included), and one award in “Books, Other.”

SIU Press Director Amy Etcheson attended to accept awards on behalf of the authors who couldn’t make it. She describes the event as “overflowing with positive energy for SIU Press” and says the Press’s importance “to the preservation and study of our state’s history was clear to all present.”

[\*Avenues of Transformation: Illinois’s Path from Territory to State\*](#), written by James A. Edstrom and published by SIU Press in November 2022, received the Russell P. Strange Book of the Year Award. The ISHS calls the book “[a]n extraordinary scholarly achievement” and says, “In telling the story of Illinois’s path to statehood, Edstrom thoroughly explores the issues and personalities at play. The focus on his three main figures—Cook, Pope, and Kane—[not only illuminates] the times in which they lived but [also provides] background on their personal histories, motivations, goals, successes, and failures. The book’s significance for state history cannot be overstated.”

Author James A. Edstrom says, “I am extraordinarily grateful to the Illinois State Historical Society for conferring this great honor upon me. It belongs equally to my friends at Southern Illinois University Press who animated and energized me with words of support and encouragement throughout its development. I may have written the manuscript, but they were the ones who truly transformed it into a book. In a larger sense, this award is an implicit recognition of the family, friends, teachers, mentors, colleagues, and students who guided and accompanied me throughout a lifetime of teaching and learning.”

Three SIU Press titles won Superior Achievement Awards for “Books, Scholarly” at the ceremony. These included [\*Dawn’s Light Woman & Nicolas Franchomme: Marriage and Law in the Illinois Country\*](#) by Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon K. Person, [\*Mary Lincoln Demystified: Frequently Asked Questions about Abraham’s Wife\*](#) by Donna D. McCreary, and [\*Forgetting and the Forgotten: A Thousand Years of Contested Histories in the Heartland\*](#) by Michael C. Batinski, which the ISHS calls “undoubtedly one of the best two books this year.” Also in the “Books, Scholarly” category, two SIU Press titles won Certificates of Excellence: Wilfredo Cruz’s [\*Latinos in Chicago: Quest for a Political Voice\*](#) and Melissa Ford’s [\*A Brick and a Bible: Black Women’s Radical Activism in the Midwest during the Great Depression\*](#). In addition, [\*Illinois Trails & Traces: Portraits and Stories along the State’s Historic Routes\*](#) by Gary Marx and Daniel Overturf earned a Superior Achievement Award in “Books, Other.”

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