

Since 2013, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has kept a half-million pounds of used but usable furniture out of regional landfills.

The furniture has gone to help children and families in the U.S. and a half dozen countries overseas.



Every year, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign replaces thousands of pieces of furniture. Bedroom sets and lounge furnishings from residence halls. Classroom and laboratory furnishings. Office furniture from administrative areas. Plus libraries, kitchens, cafeterias, auditoriums, conference rooms.

Illinois has a [comprehensive Sustainability program](#), the [Illinois Climate Action Plan](#), which is managed through the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment. Waste reduction – specifically including reuse – is a central component of iCAP. To the maximum extent practicable, reusable excess furniture is either repurposed on campus or distributed to other state agencies and institutions through the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

Unfortunately, there is little need or demand for used residential and classroom furnishings. There's an additional issue with residential furnishings, in that they are replaced hundreds or thousands of pieces at a time, typically in projects on a very tight schedule. There's no time, space, or budget to place and distribute them through the state system, or warehouse them against some future need. So through the years, the vast majority of used furnishings have ultimately been discarded as scrap.

## A Better Way

In 2013 Illinois first contacted IRN. Melissa Marriott in the Housing Facilities Planning Group took the lead. Her group established that using IRN's services is consistent with state regulations: once the determination has been made that the furnishings are scrap, with no demand elsewhere in the state system, reuse by nonprofit organizations is the preferred disposition option.

In 2013 IRN found a home for 2,820 pieces of furniture from three Illinois residence halls. That was the first of a series of projects that continue today. Through the beginning of 2018, Illinois has provided nearly 5,500 pieces of usable furniture to nonprofits – more than half a million pounds, filling 33 tractor trailers.



## IRN – The Reuse Network

## How It Works

Handling furniture for reuse is little different than handling it for disposal. University-hired movers dismantle the furniture as needed, and bring it out of the building. There, instead of filling giant metal “rolloff” boxes to go to the landfill, they pack the furniture into tractor trailers, and the trailers drive to the charitable recipient that IRN has identified. Reuse takes no more time and no more labor.

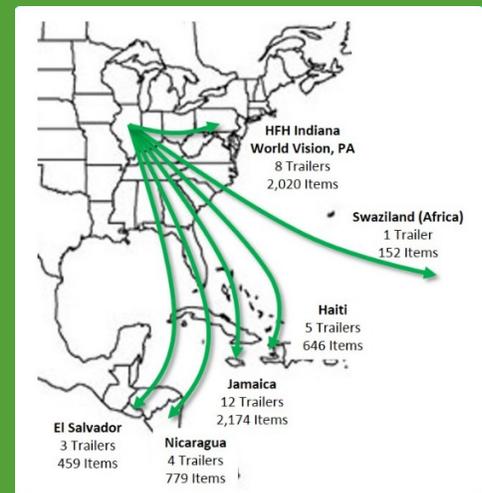
In fact, reuse almost always takes less time. Depending on what’s being loaded, each trailer that’s packed for reuse holds as much furniture as three or four of those big metal boxes. There’s that much less traffic on the

Illinois campus, less congestion around the project site, and less chance that trucks will get stuck in traffic or otherwise delayed. There’s less crew downtime, because when one trailer is full another wheels in to take its place. Using rolloff boxes, in contrast, there’s a 15 or 20 minute process each time a box is swapped out, and the packing crew comes to a halt every time.

At the end of each project, Illinois gets a detailed report on exactly what has been loaded, and where it’s gone. Most Illinois furnishings go to recipients for whom the alternative is to have no furniture at all, as a result of natural disaster, war, or endemic poverty. It’s a great story, and a great reality.



Location	Dorm Bed	Matt-ress	Cot	Dorm Desk	Desk Chair	Dresser	Total
Forbes, Allen, Lincoln Ave.	330	839	125	1,008	518		2,820
Busey-Evans				406		53	459
Hopkins	208			498	460	10	1,176
Snyder	98	98		388	391		975
<b>Total</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>1,369</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>5,430</b>



Above Left: Since 2013, Illinois has provided more than 5,400 items of surplus furniture to nonprofits.

Above: Illinois furnishings have been provided to communities in 5 countries and 2 U.S. states.

Far Left: Beds and dressers staged for shipment, Hopkins Hall, 2016

Left: One of Illinois’ first projects with IRN, Forbes Hall, 2013

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