
Catalog Membership Grant

Guidance for Nonautomated Libraries

Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs)

Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs) are groups of libraries, also referred to as consortia, that share centrally managed catalog software. LLSAPs help make your collections more accessible by providing an online interface for searching, placing holds, and other functions, and by providing a software platform to help your staff manage circulation records, patron information, and information about your collections. This important form of resource sharing allows libraries to share the costs associated with catalog software and to seamlessly share their materials with each other through [interlibrary loan](#). Materials are transported between libraries by [RAILS Delivery](#). The services you receive from an LLSAP can significantly enhance your library's services and may also incur new costs. The [RAILS Catalog Membership Grant](#) can help offset the initial costs of joining an LLSAP.

Nonautomated Library Application Requirements

If your library is nonautomated—i.e. does not currently use a fully featured catalog software platform to circulate items and manage patrons—RAILS requires that you review this guide before applying for a Catalog Membership Grant to help you prepare for the impact of automation on your organization as well as the financial commitments and ongoing responsibilities to the LLSAP and to fellow member libraries.

The application form details an additional requirement for nonautomated libraries to submit documentation that demonstrates support from the library's board or other administrative body for its LLSAP participation.

Scope of Grant Eligibility

This guide is a general resource for nonautomated libraries planning for significant operational transitions related to joining an LLSAP, using catalog software for the first time, and sustaining LLSAP membership over the longer term. We encourage you to consult it as you develop the comprehensive project plan and budget required in the Catalog Membership Grant application. The grant covers one-time costs for joining an LLSAP, and activities and expenses that extend beyond that scope are not eligible for funding. Please carefully review the eligibility criteria outlined in the grant application and budget template to ensure your request aligns with requirements.

Contact

Some areas of this guide will require information from the LLSAP you wish to join. Contact information and links to websites for each LLSAP can be found on the [RAILS website](#).

Questions about this guide, the grant process and requirements, RAILS LLSAP support in general, and identifying which LLSAP you should join can be directed to Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services, at anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org or 630-734-5127.

We want your library's project to succeed and welcome you to reach out if you have questions or just to let us know you're considering this important undertaking. Examples of successful applications can also be provided upon request.

Additional Resources

In addition to the links provided throughout this guide, the following resources are starting points for more information on some of the key topics covered.

- [ILLINET Interlibrary Loan code](#)
- [Illinois Public Library Standards](#)
- [Library Records Confidentiality Act](#)
- [RAILS Deals and Discounts](#)
- [RAILS Resource Sharing Plan](#)

Review the landscape

As your library considers whether to join an LLSAP and how to plan for the project, you will examine a broad range of factors including your library's current collections, services, staffing, community needs, strategic priorities, general financial position, geography, and available options.

Assess current library circumstances and costs

It is useful to have a clear understanding of the resources your library may currently be devoting to these areas:

- Community needs and/or library goals related to library materials, collection development practices, [interlibrary loan](#), and [reciprocal access](#)
- Information about your collection and circulation, including:
 - Size (number of titles and items) and condition of collection, including weeding practices and any subcategories currently in use (children's, graphic novels, music, etc.)
 - Format and condition of any physical or digital cataloging records
 - Format and condition of patron records and library cards
 - Materials processing, including whether you apply call number stickers and item barcodes
 - Circulation policies and practices
- Cost and status of any software currently used to manage holdings and/or patron records
- Condition of staff and patron computer equipment, network equipment such as routers and Wi-Fi, internet speed, and staff training needs for working with library software
- Staff time and skills dedicated to working with patron searching and discovery, circulation tasks, and cataloging items

Assess available automation and resource sharing options

RAILS enthusiastically supports both options below; our priority is for your library to make the most effective use of the resources available to you.

- To evaluate LLSAP membership, contact the LLSAP Director to request a quote, review membership parameters, and discuss the process and timeline to join. If needed, RAILS staff can help you identify the LLSAP that serves libraries in your geographic area. Each LLSAP offers a different mix of services and has their own fee structures and membership requirements. Their staff can help you assess costs and identify points of comparison with your current situation.
- If LLSAP participation is not feasible for your library, Find More Illinois membership paired with scaled-down library catalog software may be a suitable option. To evaluate Find More Illinois, visit the [Find More Illinois website](#) to learn more about the service, request a quote, and get in touch with staff who can answer questions. This service is available to all libraries regardless of their automation situation, and LLSAP members can add Find More Illinois at any time.

Plan for the costs of automation and LLSAP membership

Costs of automation and LLSAP membership may include but are not necessarily limited to the following categories. Some costs may be identified in consultation with the LLSAP, and others will be gathered from within your library organization and/or technology vendors.

Vendor and LLSAP Fees

- In addition to one-time implementation costs, plan for annual membership fees and any costs for optional services from or outside of the LLSAP
- Understand the possibility of increases in membership fees and other costs, and the ways membership may be subsidized by RAILS direct support to the LLSAP

Technology Equipment

- Catalog software is accessed via a web browser, installed software, or both. Staff need access to a computer with an internet connection to circulate materials, catalog items, and attend meetings and training
- A public computer with an internet connection allows patrons to search the catalog and place holds on items
- Network equipment such as switches, routers, and Wi-Fi access points, along with sufficient internet speed, are essential elements of a robust and secure technology infrastructure that supports LLSAP access
- Peripheral equipment such as barcode readers and receipt printers provide efficiency in LLSAP-related workflows

Supplies

- Barcode labels are applied to library items and their numbers added to the MARC records in the catalog. Contact RAILS staff to identify a unique barcode prefix for items and patrons, then order item and patron barcode stickers
- Additional supplies could include receipt paper, library cards, call number labels, and other items needed to process new materials

Sustainable funding and governing body support

Support from the library's board or other administrative body is essential, and documentation of any relevant formal decisions or governance actions is a required component of your Catalog Membership Grant application form. Work with them to create a plan for sustaining [RAILS membership requirements](#), ongoing costs of LLSAP membership for at least five years, reasonable levels of possible cost increases, and sufficient staffing.

Prepare to adjust library procedures and responsibilities

You may need to establish new policies or procedures in these areas, and support staff in taking on new responsibilities and learning new skills.

Library website

- A robust online presence provides your patrons with links to search your catalog and place holds, information on your services and policies, and access to online library resources
- Ensure that your website can be easily updated by staff and meets web accessibility requirements. You may also want to be able to add features such as catalog search widgets

Patron data

- Patron data will be added to the catalog software, including at least name, address, contact information, and unique ID (typically a barcode number using your library's unique prefix)
- You may need to establish a PIN for patrons to log in to the catalog
- Ensure patron privacy with appropriate data collection practices and plan for ongoing maintenance of patron information

Staff roles and training

- ILS software – basic understanding of software functions, required training, and compliance with LLSAP policies and procedures
- Patron assistance – searching, placing holds, filling holds, and account management
- Cataloging according to general standards, local preferences, and the LLSAP's requirements. [Training is available from RAILS](#) and may be available from LLSAP staff
- LLSAP governance and policies – understanding the terms of the membership agreement; participation in governing boards, committees, and user groups

Understand collection management considerations

Condition and maintenance of library collection

- The data required for the LLSAP's catalog and potential wear and tear on items related to increased circulation volume may lead to changes or additions to the library's processing procedures for new acquisitions
- We highly suggest that libraries weed their collections before creating MARC records or implementing catalog software
- If your library does not already have a collection development and/or weeding policy, consult the [RAILS Policies, Procedures, and Plans Repository](#) for examples

Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) records and cataloging

The digitized bibliographic information about items in your collection contained in MARC records is crucial for finding and sharing materials effectively. If you do not have MARC records, identifying your items and obtaining records will involve library staff training and work, costs to find and create records, or both. Cataloging activities then become a part of regular library operations. RAILS recommends that records conform to [RAILS Best Practices for Consortial Cataloging](#) as a start, but LLSAP generally have their own specific requirements for the content and handling of MARC records which may be more stringent.