



RAILS Special Library Fact Sheet

Compiled October 2018

What is a special library?

Special libraries fill a unique niche in the library community. Their collections are often heavily weighted to one area of interest in support of a specific user base. Because of this specialization, the libraries often house special collections that are invaluable not only to their own users but also to researchers around the world.

Total number of special libraries in RAILS: **192**
At least half are located within the city of Chicago

What are the different types of special libraries?

Type	Organizations	Example
Law/legal	Law firms, corporate legal places, law schools, court libraries	Kirkland & Ellis
Corporate/nonprofit/association	Organizations that serve clients, customers, members	Ecolab
Medical/hospital	Medical schools, hospitals, medical facilities	Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Government/military	Research facilities, prisons, military bases	Naval State Great Lakes
Museum/art	Cultural heritage organizations, art museums	Newberry Library

Figure 1. Types of special libraries and organizations w/ RAILS examples

What services do RAILS special libraries utilize?

Special library resources	Non-special library resources
Delivery	Trustee training
Continuing education	FOIA/OMA hotline
Group discounts & purchasing	Sample policies/procedures
Grants	Sample job descriptions
Connections/networking	
E-book support	
Shared catalogs/Find More Illinois	
Email lists & social media	

Sparks podcast	
Job board	
Free/for sale/wanted	
Fast Facts	

Figure 2. Services RAILS special libraries utilize, special and non-special library resources.

What types of continuing education topics are RAILS special libraries looking for?

- Marketing
- Project management
- Knowledge management
- Data management
- Embedded librarianship

Where are RAILS special libraries located?

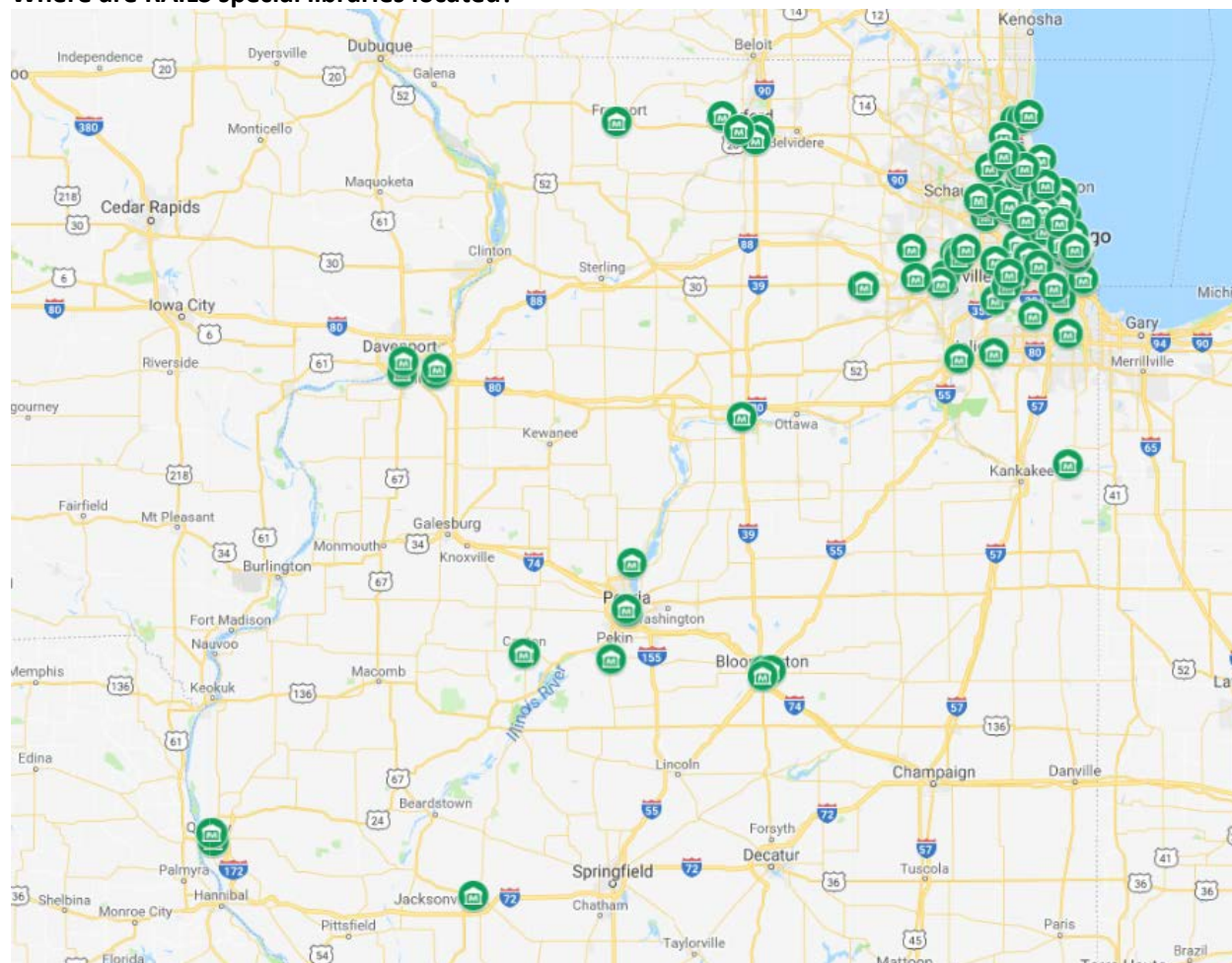


Figure 3. Map of special libraries in the RAILS region.

More resources

Serving Special Libraries. 2018. OCLC. Accessed from: <https://www.oclc.org/en/special.html>

Working in Special Libraries or Information Centers. 2018. School of Information. San Jose State University. Accessed from: <http://ischool.sjsu.edu/career-development/career-direction/environments/special-libraries>