

Analysis of RAILS Public Library IPLAR Data

By Aaron Skog, SWAN Executive Director

Purpose

This overview examines the IPLAR data of RAILS public libraries for the past 5 years. The data is evidence there is widespread societal change in the use of public libraries. This analysis of data trends is extended for the next 5 years. Public libraries and library consortia that support them can use this analysis for strategic planning initiatives.

What Does IPLAR Data Show?

IPLAR data for the past five years shows some trends that all public libraries should become aware of.

- ★ Physical circulation is down overall 18% for all public libraries in RAILS
- ★ E-content circulation has increased 13%, but represents 8% of overall circulation for public libraries in RAILS
- ★ Library visits are down overall 11% for public libraries in RAILS
- ★ Library program attendance is up 20%, but represents 9% of overall library visits for public libraries in RAILS

Circulation

IPLAR circulation data reported is for physical collections.

Chart 1	Circulation Change from 2012 to 2017	E-Content Change from 2015 to 2017	Visits Change from 2012 to 2017	Programs Change from 2012 to 2017
CCS	-16%	22%	-11%	37%
Pinnacle Library Cooperative (PLC)	-13%	45%	-26%	30%
Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)	-3%	51%	2%	11%
SWAN	-21%	15%	-4%	8%
Northern Illinois Cooperative (NIC)	-18%	29%	-32%	7%
Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)	-40%	24%	32%	-18%
PrairieCat (PRCAT)	-22%	34%	-12%	10%
Stand Alone Libraries	-19%	-6%	-14%	26%
RAILS Public Overall	-18%	13%	-11%	20%

E-Content Usage

IPLAR began collecting e-content circulation in 2015 so there is only 3 years of data to examine. E-content includes eBooks and streaming services public libraries have made available. While e-content circulation is up 13% over the past 3-years, the percentage of the overall circulation remains small.

Chart 2	2015 E-Content Usage as Percentage of Overall Circulation	2016 E-Content Usage as Percentage of Overall Circulation	2017 E-Content Usage as Percentage of Overall Circulation
CCS	6%	7%	9%
PLC	6%	8%	11%
RSA	4%	7%	8%
SWAN	5%	7%	7%
NIC	6%	7%	9%
RRLC	5%	5%	9%
PRCAT	7%	9%	11%
STANDALONE	7%	7%	8%
RAILS Public Libraries	6%	7%	8%

Library Programs & Visits

Library program attendance has increased 20%, but the attendance as a percentage of library visits remains low.

Chart 3	2013 Program Attendance as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits	2015 Program Attendance as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits	2016 Program Attendance as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits	2017 Program Attendance as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits
CCS	6%	7%	8%	9%
PLC	9%	11%	12%	15%
RSA	7%	7%	7%	8%
SWAN	6%	6%	6%	7%
NIC	6%	8%	11%	9%
RRLC	7%	8%	6%	6%
PRCAT	9%	10%	11%	11%
STANDALONE	7%	8%	9%	9%
RAILS Public Libraries	7%	8%	8%	9%

What Can We Infer from this Data?

- ★ This is not catalog or ILS platform specific. Public Library circulation is falling broadly across various catalog interfaces and does not support the idea that a choice in a catalog platform has hurt circulation.
- ★ Public library e-content usage is not rising fast enough to counter the fall in physical circulation.
- ★ Program attendance is increasing, but it is not rising fast enough to counter the falling foot traffic due to library circulation falling dramatically.

What Will the Future Look Like?

If these trends continue over the next 5 years, the impact would look like this in terms of total numbers

Chart 4	2017 Physical Circulation	2022 Projection Circulation	2017 E-Content Circulation	2022 Projection E-Content Circulation	2017 Library Visits	2022 Projection Library Visits	2017 Program Attendance	2022 Projection Program Attendance
CCS	12,764,047	10,744,674	1,266,604	1,545,149	6,585,844	5,867,029	658,768	905,379
Pinnacle Library Cooperative	3,069,535	2,680,264	381,884	555,389	1,728,039	1,272,676	303,010	395,233
Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)	5,617,132	5,427,587	471,501	713,829	3,417,670	3,477,473	282,275	313,484
SWAN	16,048,129	12,731,835	1,160,067	1,337,572	13,043,376	12,493,947	969,395	1,045,073
Northern Illinois Cooperative	1,284,491	1,053,100	121,863	157,248	708,005	481,331	66,906	71,378
Rock River Library Consortium	188,008	112,845	18,344	22,694	239,737	317,297	14,835	12,149
PrairieCat	5,229,563	4,063,268	643,582	862,403	4,059,047	3,567,982	490,041	538,263
Stand Alone Libraries	34,951,678	28,355,399	2,996,897	2,829,535	17,202,039	14,777,018	1,636,491	2,058,662
RAILS Public Overall	79,152,583	64,982,338	7,060,742	8,000,263	46,983,757	41,982,975	4,421,721	5,294,425

Physical circulation falls at the same rate as the past 5 years, 2012-2017. The falling circulation of physical materials would cause the overall percentage of e-content circulation to rise, despite its low growth. Program attendance at libraries would continue to rise and become a larger percentage of the overall library attendance.

Chart 5	5-Year Projection of Circulation Change: 2017-2022	2017 E- Content Usage as Percentage of Overall Circulation	5-Year Projection E-Content Usage of Percentage of Overall Circulation: 2017-2022	2017 Program Attendance as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits	5-Year Projection of Program Attendance Change as a Percentage of Overall Library Visits: 2017-2022
CCS	-16%	9%	13%	9%	13%
Pinnacle Library Cooperative	-13%	11%	17%	15%	24%
Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)	-3%	8%	12%	8%	8%
SWAN	-21%	7%	10%	7%	8%
Northern Illinois Cooperative	-18%	9%	13%	9%	13%
Rock River Library Consortium	-40%	9%	17%	6%	4%
PrairieCat	-22%	11%	18%	11%	13%
Stand Alone Libraries	-19%	8%	9%	9%	12%
RAILS Public Overall	-18%	8%	11%	9%	11%

Questions about this analysis? Have some ideas for future ones? Contact me!

Aaron Skog

Executive Director

aaron@swanlibraries.net • (630)326-7022

SWAN Library Services

800 Quail Ridge Drive, Westmont, IL 60559

844-792-6542

swanlibraries.net • catalog.swanlibraries.net
