

RAILS Report

Databases, Deals, and Discounts

RAILS partners with a wide variety of vendors to offer special, deeply discounted rates for our member libraries. These discounts combined have resulted in close to \$1 million in savings for RAILS members over the past year. Our EBSCO deals saved more than 100 libraries over \$400,000. RBDigital savings from list price were over \$400,000. Other impactful deals included Swank Movie Licensing, PressReader, READSquared, and OpenGov, which combined for another \$100,000 in savings for participating libraries in FY 2020.

RAILS deals and discounts announced since Spring 2020 include the following:

- **EBSCO Learning Express Library** – An e-learning solution that provides support to students and professionals for academic skill-building, standardized test prep, & career certification test prep.
- **EBSCO LibraryAware/Next Reads** - Helps libraries connect with readers and keep them engaged. It includes templates and tools to create newsletters, bookmarks, shelf talkers, flyers, and more.
- **PressReader: Digital Discounts and Magazines** - Provides remote access to thousands of newspapers and magazines from 120 countries and 60 different languages servicing a diverse range of patron communities.
- **Team One: PPE and Technology Products** - As a federal government contractor, Team One has access to PPE products such as masks, gloves, clear acrylic shields and a very unique kiosk from HP. Stock levels are impacted by demand and out-of-stocks are indicated on the Team One webpage.
- **Unique Curbside Communicator: Curbside Service Software** - Curbside Communicator is a tool that lets Library staff communicate with patrons via text message to facilitate a safe and seamless curbside hold pick-up process.

For more details on offers, log into the RAILS website with your L2 login information and go to the [Deals and Discounts](#) page.

E-books and E-Content

RAILS E-Content Focus

There has been a lot of interest in library e-content since COVID-19 related library closures and limited service offerings took effect in March. This includes renewed interest in eRead Illinois. RAILS has worked with Baker & Taylor (our eRead vendor) to expedite the onboarding of new libraries to allow them to respond to user needs.

RAILS concluded the eRead Illinois renewal process on July 1. A total of 420 libraries successfully renewed their eRead Illinois subscriptions for FY 2021. We also added 16 new eRead Illinois member libraries between April and July of this year. Between July 1 and August 15, we added an additional 18 eRead Illinois members - 17 school districts and one academic library.

On August 27, RAILS held an online roundtable on E-Content Options for Schools. Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, provided an overview of the eRead Illinois program including information about the collection, scoping options for schools, fee structure, and how to sign up. She also discussed the RAILS for Schools BiblioBoard Library site (available on the BiblioBoard page on the RAILS website).

RAILS has posted a list of Free and Discounted E-Content Resources on the COVID-19 Library Pulse Page to help offset the impact of increased demand for remote resources and the temporary loss of physical resources and spaces for libraries and programs. The list includes available RAILS products/services (BiblioBoard, eRead Illinois, etc.) and other offerings.

In April, RAILS ran a series of four ads promoting BiblioBoard and inkie.org to the general public, including two Facebook (FB) ads and two Instagram (IG) ads designed by Nicole Zimmermann from the RAILS staff. Over 18,000 people saw at least one of these ads and they generated hundreds of link clicks.

SimplyE for Consortia

RAILS continues to explore costs and development issues related to expanding our efforts to bring SimplyE to RAILS libraries. SimplyE is a library-developed, open source e-reader and e-book discovery app that simplifies the library user's experience in finding, borrowing and reading library e-books. For libraries with multiple collections, it unifies the patron experience to a single interface using the free SimplyE e-reading app.

Deirdre Brennan, Leila Heath, and Anna Behm from the RAILS staff are on the national SimplyE Council. The council meets monthly to discuss technical and development issues. Current issues in various stages of resolution include: OverDrive audiobook integration, BiblioBoard integration, and unsatisfactory performance on devices. We are working with vendors and other library systems regarding costs and strategies to implement the program when appropriate. While SimplyE is not ready for widespread deployment at RAILS, it is providing critical insights into potential solutions for more favorable e-book purchasing models and interfaces that encourage checkouts rather than hold placements and ultimately, provide a better user experience.

RAILS Works with ICOLC on OCLC Pricing Discrepancies

The cost of OCLC membership is an impediment to expanding resource sharing for many Illinois libraries, and libraries of similar size have reported significant differences in OCLC fees. RAILS has been working with ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) to analyze these pricing discrepancies. ICOLC is an informal group currently comprising approximately 200 library consortia from around the world. Member consortia serve all types and sizes of libraries. RAILS discovered significant discrepancies in OCLC pricing data for Illinois public libraries and coordinated these results with ICOLC members' analysis of academic library data across the country. ICOLC will include these combined results as part of a larger report they are sending to OCLC to address various concerns.

Explore More Illinois

Explore More Illinois is currently suspended due to COVID-19. Most of the attractions are still closed. We worked with Quipu, our software company, to cancel outstanding reservations and we notified affected library patrons via email. As attractions begin to safely reopen, we are anticipating a return to offering Explore More Illinois in the near future.

To help Explore More library patrons during the stay-at-home period, RAILS compiled and posted an online list of free virtual tours and other cultural/entertainment opportunities. The list includes gallery tours, performances, and even virtual hikes through national parks.

Prior to the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, RAILS added a number of attractions to Explore More. Our newest attractions include:

- Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art/Oak Brook
- Peoria Park District Golf Learning Center & Academy/Peoria
- Peoria Park District Owens Recreation Center Ice Arena/Peoria
- Peoria Park District RiverPlex Recreation and Wellness Center/Peoria
- Peoria PlayHouse and Children's Museum/Peoria

We now have 265 libraries participating in Explore More Illinois. We have started contacting Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) library directors to get permission to add their libraries to Explore More Illinois. All SHARE libraries are authenticated.

Delivery

Greg Pronevitz, the consultant RAILS has been working with to help us plan for the future of delivery, has nearly completed phase two of his work. This Spring, RAILS released an RFI seeking information from vendors across the country on potential efficient and cost-effective delivery strategies.

RAILS conducted a survey from May 13 - 21 to gather information on library reopening plans and when/how libraries will be equipped to receive RAILS delivery. We received 456 responses from libraries of all types (academic, public, school, and special). Feedback from the survey was crucial in the development of our plan to resume RAILS delivery, which we publicized to members beginning June 4. We also developed an FAQ based on questions members have been asking about delivery.

RAILS first returned the 43,000+ items currently stored in our warehouses to the owning libraries on June 18 and 25. RAILS then begin full delivery on Monday, June 29 to all libraries that requested service.

RAILS staff continued to meet with other Illinois delivery stakeholders, including the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and CARLI to discuss delivery plans and communications. We have also met with the Midwest Delivery Group and ALA's Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASGCLA). All of these meetings have been extremely helpful in determining a best course of action for RAILS.

Universal Service/Unserved

On August 5, RAILS offered the webinar "Every Student Gets a Card: Leveraging IGAs to Grant Library Access to Illinois Students." This webinar featured two staff members from Roselle Public Library who spoke about their experience working with their school district to establish an intergovernmental agreement (IGA). Their IGA resulted in a number of students in unserved areas receiving library cards. Several participants said that they would like to pursue a similar IGA as a result of attending this webinar. The recording is available in the RAILS CE Archives.

2020 Census

RAILS has continued work on the 2020 census. We were awarded a \$775,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to work with libraries and hard to count communities to ensure a complete count for 2020. Many programs and organizations are dependent on federal funding that is distributed to the states based on population as determined through the census and RAILS is one of them. The State Library receives funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services every year that it, in turn, distributes to the library systems to support delivery, continuing education and other services. We also received additional funding to continue working on the census through September 30, the new final date for the census count.

In July, RAILS added over 500 titles to our statewide BiblioBoard Library collection as part of our census grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services. The Illinois Census 2020 collection focuses on health, wellness, local history, and education. Highlights include 142 e-books for children from Capstone Publishing and 158 Arcadia Press local history titles. RAILS worked with BiblioBoard to include additional census promotion and branding directly in the collection. Each item is marked with an "Illinois Census 2020" badge. The description of the collection includes language about and links to the census.