Exposing Consortial Holdings Working Group Report: EXCERPT

The Exposing Consortial Holdings Working Group was charged by the RAILS Board Consortia Committee with reviewing options for exposing library holdings on the web. Exposing consortial holdings is the first step in facilitating resource sharing and providing a vehicle for library staff and patrons to request material from other libraries. The working group examined the history, mechanics, and current landscape of this facet of library service and presents the following report. *This is an excerpt from the final report, which was presented to the RAILS Consortia Committee on October 21, 2019. The complete report is accessible at https://www.railslibraries.info/system/files/Anyone/mtg/2019/2019-10-21/161645/ECHWG%20Report%20FINAL.pdf.*

1. What options exist to help meet the objective of exposing library holdings on the web and facilitating resource sharing?

Libraries may work with any combination of some or all options listed below. Some of the following options offer either exposure of holdings OR resource sharing (considered for this report as the opportunity to place and fulfill a request for library materials), or both. Options that offer only exposure can serve as an avenue for patron discovery, but may still present a barrier to fulfillment.

Shared Catalog Consortia

Shared catalog consortia, as discussed above, expose the holdings of each individual member library. They also offer requesting and fulfillment of holds, and materials are conveyed between libraries by regional library systems. The advantages of sharing holdings of many libraries across one platform, patron-initiated requesting, and seamless delivery, meet the majority of patron needs. Estimates vary across consortia, and precise numbers are challenging to identify due to the idiosyncrasies across libraries and consortia of how interlibrary loan numbers are tracked and reported, but it's safe to say that 95-98% of interlibrary loan activity at any library in a given consortium happens within that consortium.

OCLC Interlibrary Loan

This option is available to the 813 OCLC member libraries in RAILS that are part of the Illinois Group Services contract or that pay a la carte for this service. This option offers staff-mediated or unmediated requesting via the OCLC interface or catalog integrations. OCLC also exposes library holdings publicly via WorldCat; libraries must make manual or batch updates to ensure accuracy. Across Illinois, consortium libraries account for about 51% of interlibrary loan requests and 58% of loans filled via OCLC, with I-Share libraries being the heaviest consortial users of OCLC ILL.

The following table shows interlibrary loan activity within consortia and in OCLC for RAILS libraries during FY2019. Note that OCLC members are counted and presented in OCLC-supplied statistics at the building level, which is reflected in the standalone library count. Consortium member numbers are presented here at the agency level. Overall, consortial libraries are generous lenders, and fulfill the majority of their own interlibrary loan needs within their consortium.

Consortium	Libraries	Intraconsortial ILL Borrowing	OCLC Requests Initiated	OCLC Loans Filled
Pinnacle	6	333,958	16,493	5,840
RRLC	9	10,359	3,477	569
CCS	25	1,254,493	20,836	40,378
I-Share	68	175,345	104,748	77,066
SWAN	99	1,578,467	48,128	52,309
RSA	148	645,399	14,537	17,889
PrairieCat	136	646,642	20,374	20,236
Standalone	1,190	N/A	217,626	156,757

Figure 3: Interlibrary loan activity in RAILS in FY2019

Find More Illinois

Find More Illinois is a RAILS service offered to Illinois libraries. It uses the SHAREit software from AutoGraphics to connect multiple consortial and standalone ILS platforms to provide a single web-based interface for patrons to search for items and place interlibrary loan requests, and for library staff to manage those requests. For most participating libraries, holdings are updated in real time in SHAREit. For most consortial catalogs, the holdings of all member libraries are exposed, and only those holdings of Find More Illinois participants are available for request.

Find More Illinois went live with a limited pilot in 2018, and is consistently growing. As of September 2019, there are 37 public, academic, and school library members, representing five consortia and six standalone libraries. As it grows past its infancy, Find More Illinois will become a stronger resource sharing platform, with standalone libraries and members of smaller consortia seeing the most benefit. In addition, AutoGraphics offers ISSI (Interstate Sharing Initiative), an AutoGraphics initiative that connects multiple SHAREit consortia across the United States. Find More Illinois participants can opt in to ISSI individually once RAILS enables participation.

Other Solutions

OCLC FirstSearch/WorldCat

The Illinois State Library pays for a statewide subscription to FirstSearch, including access to WorldCat Discovery, which exposes the collections of OCLC members statewide. Libraries that are not OCLC members can still use FirstSearch for searching.

ALA request form

Any library can use the ALA/RUSA-supplied ILL form to fax or email a request to any other library.

PrairieCat barcode purchases

The PrairieCat consortium offers a barcode for $100 to standalone libraries that allows access for staff to place 100 holds in the PrairieCat catalog on behalf of patrons.

SHARE Illinois

SHARE Illinois is a loose cooperative agreement between most RAILS consortia that provides for the creation and maintenance of patron barcodes assigned to each library of all participating consortia. Library staff use these barcodes to log into the online catalogs and place holds on behalf of their patrons. This was originally established in 2003 as a workaround for a more

centralized and automated solution. RAILS support will be sunsetted when five of the six RAILS-area consortia have libraries participating in Find More Illinois.

Standalone catalog access

Some standalone libraries allow access to the public catalog for other libraries to place holds on behalf of their patrons, generally with reciprocity expected.

2. Is it necessary to have a single solution to accomplish the goals of accurately exposing consortial holdings and facilitating resource sharing?

Any solution(s) should address the needs of multiple sizes and types of libraries, and offer libraries the ability to make their own decisions from a suite of options. It is not likely that a single solution can accomplish this. Patrons may engage in discovery from a number of different sources that may in turn result in a request for libraries to engage their resource sharing options to obtain needed materials.

3. What are the potential pathways that may or may not include OCLC? How important is it to consortia to require OCLC membership?

Resource sharing

Illinois has a strong tradition of resource sharing, and many library workers consider it their professional responsibility to share their library's materials. These activities have been bolstered for decades by state-supported delivery services offered at no cost to libraries, and a history of required OCLC membership. Though OCLC membership is no longer required by the Illinois State Library, many consortia do require OCLC, and an overall perception remains that OCLC is a must for Illinois libraries. In practice, consortial holdings fulfill most ILL needs of their members, and the need for OCLC resource sharing is dependent on library size and type. OCLC use is heaviest among academic libraries; for many other libraries (especially schools and small public libraries), OCLC is not a crucial piece of the resource sharing puzzle and some other combination of the options above could provide a workable solution depending on interlibrary loan volume and needs. In addition to or instead of OCLC resource sharing, Find More Illinois can be a scalable and cost-effective option for standalone and consortial libraries.

Cataloging

The need for OCLC as a source of cataloging records is a necessary part of any conversation about OCLC. Many consortia require OCLC membership, and the Illinois library community has a tradition of prioritizing OCLC-sourced records. The 2015 RAILS OCLC Alternatives Environmental Scan Report (https://www.railslibraries.info/system/files/Anyone/attachment/pdf/environmental_scan_of_oclc_alternatives_final_report.pdf) explored alternatives to OCLC for cataloging records, and concluded that in the mixed bag of vendor-sourced records, SkyRiver was the only possible viable option at scale. However, anecdotal information indicates the status of SkyRiver is currently unknown. There are several smaller-scale sources for quality cataloging records outside of OCLC, but these have limited application. Consortia tend to prefer to keep their databases clear of lower-quality metadata supplied by materials vendors. OCLC continues to be highly preferred as a source of cataloging records.

4. Discrepancies in fees and prohibitively high cost to some libraries erode statewide investment in OCLC. What is the Illinois State Library's long-term commitment to OCLC, and WorldCat specifically?

OCLC membership fees for Illinois libraries vary widely based on how fees were calculated at the time the library joined. Some libraries pay as low as $200-300 per year, while others' fees are in the mid-five figures. These fee discrepancies do not correspond directly to use or demographic factors – similarly sized libraries can have fees that vary by thousands of dollars. Additionally, the current baseline fees for OCLC membership are too high for many smaller libraries. RAILS attempted to work with the Illinois State Library and OCLC in 2015 to shed light on these discrepancies and attempt to find resolution. Much information was shared about OCLC services, use in Illinois, the effects of pricing discrepancies, and OCLC initiatives at the time. One key conclusion from these talks was that if OCLC were to recalculate fees for all RAILS libraries or for a consortial group bill based on today's formula, many libraries would be assessed much higher fees, and a reduction in fees for any library would be unlikely. When subscription pricing was introduced, OCLC made it clear that it was locking in a certain amount of revenue for the company and pricing would reflect that revenue moving forward.

The Illinois State Library has provided information about the Group Services Contract in several documents at https://cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/libraries/OCLC/home.html#Services.

The working group addressed several questions to the Illinois State Library:

What are the most used services in the Group Services contract? Is it possible to get statistics on this?

- ISL staff report that cataloging and related services are used the most, with an assumption that the most-used service in that category of the contract is Data Sync, an automated service that allows OCLC member libraries to sync their holdings with WorldCat.
- RAILS has requested detailed statistics per line item in the Group Services contract, ideally with a breakdown by library so we can further analyze use. This could be combined with additional data about those libraries to try to get a better understanding of needs and possibly try to determine a potential tier breakdown.

What is the importance of FirstSearch besides WorldCat? What is the State Library's long term commitment to FirstSearch and WorldCat?

- FirstSearch provides some research databases, but WorldCat is the most used. As the union database of member holdings, it is necessary for the OCLC Interlibrary Loan service.
- OCLC cites the exposure of holdings on the web as the primary value of FirstSearch. For example, Wikipedia uses OCLC#/WorldCat links for books, and GoodReads links to WorldCat, but the actual use of these links is unclear.
- ISL offsets the OCLC subscription bill for all ILLINET member libraries by providing FirstSearch through a separate contract with OCLC. Many libraries that don't use Group Services and/or aren't OCLC members account for a lot of WorldCat use. Academic libraries in general use it much more heavily; in particular, some Illinois academic libraries use WorldShare Management Services to supplement their ILS, leveraging the WorldCat bibliographic database and knowledge base of electronic resources using WorldCat Discovery as their discovery layer.

Would the State Library consider working with OCLC on a pricing structure that offers tiers at different levels for libraries that can't afford and/or don't need the one size fits all of the Group Services contract?

ISL is open to a tiered subscription model and has already begun the research. The Group Services contract is in place for two years (FY20-21), with optional three-year renewal, and this time would be used to determine objectives. According to OCLC, it is possible to offer a cataloging-only contract to Illinois libraries, and tiered pricing is an available option that has never been pursued. If there are potential competitors for cataloging-only services, this would have to be a separate RFP, and not renegotiated as a component of the current Group Services contract. Potential renegotiation to include tiers would be contingent on State of Illinois procurement guidelines.

Next steps would involve working with systems and consortia to determine interest and define some form of commitment to the process. ISL wants to be sure that whatever they do is responsive to actual member needs, with the acknowledgement that the needs of academic libraries are very different from most of the rest of the library community. Participation by any library is not mandated at the state or system level, but may be required by consortia.

Working Group Recommendations

Each of the concentric circles in the graphic below is a key component of the resource sharing landscape in Illinois. Not all libraries participate at all levels, but each level should be strengthened and supported to the greatest extent possible. The following recommendations are intended to address the most pressing short-, medium- and long-term issues articulated in the Working Group's charge.
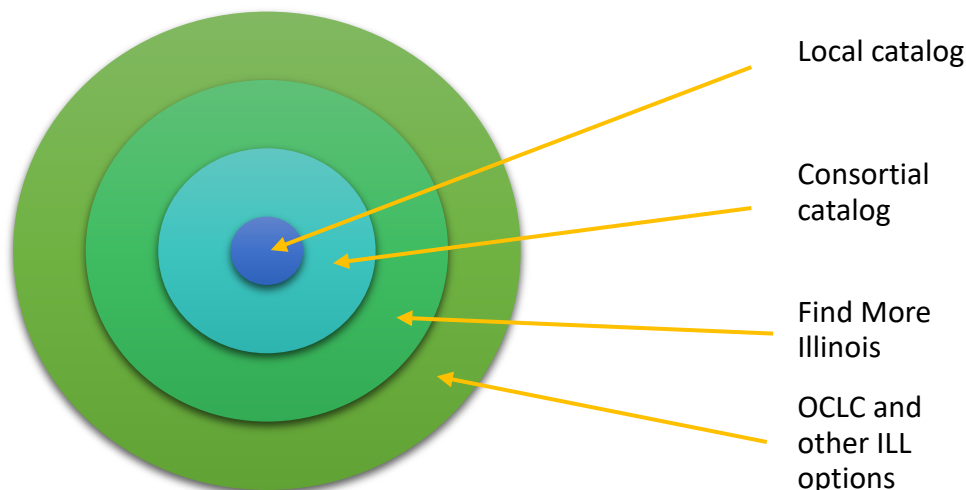

Local catalog

Consortial catalog

Find More Illinois

OCLC and other ILL options

Figure 4: Resource sharing options in Illinois

1. Continue with OHM. RAILS LLSAPs could consider using some of their financial support from RAILS to support this effort.
2. Address the inequities in OCLC pricing and use. This factor is largely out of our control – a mass recalculation within the current Group Services contract is not workable. The following options should be explored:

      a. The existence of viable alternatives, especially the growth of Find More Illinois, could allow some libraries to drop membership.

      b. Work with ISL to explore options outside of the current Group Services contract such as cataloging-only and tiered subscription pricing.

      c. It is possible that there are strategic opportunities for consortia members to leave OCLC. For example, libraries that do not bring OCLC cataloging records into the database can still attach their holdings in the consortial database and use non-OCLC options for external ILL.

3. Find More Illinois is in its infancy and will continue to grow with continued promotion from RAILS. RAILS will participate in ISSI (Interstate Sharing Initiative), which will expand the potential of Find More Illinois to fulfill broader resource sharing needs.

4. Sunset SHARE Illinois as Find More Illinois grows, reducing confusion and simplifying the available options.