



TO: LLSAP Sustainability Working Group

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

RE: Sustainability, equity, affordability, goals and next steps

DATE: November 10, 2021

The LSWG charge is to develop:

- A plan, not to exceed 5 years, to ensure that all RAILS LLSAPs are financially self-sustaining.
- A plan for RAILS to support capital investment in LLSAPs, including but not limited to:
 - Technology or software upgrades
 - Membership expansion
 - Research and development related to technology and services design and delivery
 - Cost savings and efficiency enhancements, including potential mergers of existing LLSAPs

Nowhere in this charge is there any mention of cutting funding to the LLSAPs. Our focus – both RAILS’s and the working group’s, is to ensure SUSTAINABILITY of the LLSAPs.

Sustainability means that the LLSAPs would not be dependent on RAILS funding to survive, as two of them are now, RSA and PrairieCat. Sustainability would enable the LLSAPs and their membership to feel confident in their ability to fund the critical services of their LLSAP on an annual basis, and look to RAILS for some of the reasons cited above - upgrades, membership expansion, research, etc. The working group’s challenge is to take a step back from the current situation, and the history that has brought us here, and really think creatively about what we want the future to look like.

Another piece of sustainability is the ability of our member libraries to afford membership in an LLSAP. Not all libraries can afford it, period. It was certainly a noble goal when LLSAPs were forming to include all libraries of all types, regardless of ability to sustain appropriate membership fees, but this has resulted in the situation we have today with LLSAPs dependent on RAILS funds for survival, and LLSAP membership fees that don’t allow the LLSAP to innovate, upgrade, or easily add desired new services. To ensure that we are serving our members’ resource sharing needs equitably and affordably, we need an alternative to an LLSAP – such as Find More Illinois, or even a separate consortium for school libraries, or other ideas that this working group is charged to identify.

At the last meeting, a request was made that we “do something” since our timeline calls for a draft plan

by January. I no longer believe this timeline is realistic, partly because of the scope of the work we have cut out for us, but also, and maybe more importantly, because the members of the working group need to have a clear and shared understanding of the huge variation in library funding across the RAILS service area. Therefore, I am making the following recommendations to the group:

1. Extend our timeline to December 2022.
2. RAILS staff will gather and share funding information with the group such as:
 - LLSAP funding
 - Library funding
 - LLSAP service costs
 - System funding
 - Costs of FMI
 - Costs of OCLC

Some of this information is included in the meeting packet, but I am sure there is other data, which we should discuss at the meeting.

I also want to lay out why I think an alternative to OCLC is critical. We spend \$5,000,000 annually on the OCLC group services contract. We already know that the pricing per library makes very little sense. We also know that LLSAP member libraries do most of their resource sharing through their LLSAP. Non-LLSAP members, particularly academic libraries, do rely heavily on OCLC for resource sharing.

As far as cataloging goes, the [OCLC Member Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#) says:

“OCLC members who have extracted WorldCat data representing, or enriching the records for, their own holdings from the WorldCat database have the right to:

1. Load or incorporate such data into their library catalogs, or their discovery or resource-sharing systems, and into other intra-institutional services.
2. Use such data for purposes of supporting library collections' discovery and resource sharing; bibliographic verification; private study, learning, and teaching; and academic and scientific research.
3. Transfer or make available such data to individual scholars for their personal academic or scientific research or study, to [library consortia](#) or public agencies working on behalf of libraries, or to other libraries and educational, cultural or scholarly institutions (e.g., museums, archives, historical societies, research institutes), whether these institutions are members or non-members of OCLC, for these organizations' institutional or collaborative re-use.

In these cases, the transfer or making available of WorldCat data and its subsequent uses (including copying, displaying, publishing, modifying, reformatting, and/or creating works or services from) should be carried out in

keeping with [OCLC member community norms](#), OCLC's [public purpose](#), and this policy's intent.

4. Transfer or make available WorldCat data representing their own holdings to [agents](#) they retain to perform services on their behalf that directly benefit the OCLC member (e.g., peer or consortial resource sharing, automated authority control, increased visibility of collections).
 - a. In these cases, OCLC members should ensure that a written agreement exists with any such agent that limits the agent's use of WorldCat data to performance of the services contracted for by the OCLC member. Sample language for such agreements between members and their agents may be found in [Appendix 1](#) below.
 - b. If they also benefit the OCLC cooperative, other uses, transfers, or aggregations of WorldCat data representing a member's own holdings that serve the business purposes of an OCLC member's agent are encouraged, subject to the terms and conditions of a mutually acceptable separate agreement between the agent and OCLC. A general description of the current terms and conditions of such agreements can be found in [Appendix 2](#) below.

OCLC has in place existing agreements with many agents and will continue to create them as member needs arise.”

I believe this statement clearly allows for non-OCLC member libraries to use OCLC records for their own catalogs within a consortium, including FMI, as was described by Paul Cope and Albert Flores at our last meeting. OCLC may not prefer this, but they do not own the cataloging record data. They own WorldCat. To put it bluntly, other states do not let OCLC get away with what we allow in Illinois.

I know that there are different interpretations of this statement as has been discussed at previous meetings. I also know that other states – Florida being one example – interpret these statements as I described, and have proceeded to implement consortia policies accordingly. I think this is an area that the working group should continue to research and discuss and potentially recommend changes in Illinois libraries policies related to OCLC.

The long history of dependence on OCLC makes it very difficult for Illinois librarians to see the amount of money that is being spent annually, on very few ILL transactions for public libraries, and for duplicative cataloging that is being done by many libraries also. Why is there so much reluctance among libraries to admit that an alternative to OCLC is needed?

I believe that RAILS has a fiduciary responsibility to seek more affordable solutions than OCLC. A lot of tax dollars are being spent on OCLC every year, and in many cases the level of cost is not explainable and would be difficult to justify or explain to Illinois residents, especially in this anti-tax environment. This, to me, is a very big reason for all of us to think seriously about finding an alternative to OCLC.

Finally, we received a question from Dawn about the cost of Find More Illinois (FMI) to RAILS. FMI is only 2% of our annual budget (LLSAPs are 22.5% annually just as a point of reference). In the packet you will find a full report on FMI, both past and future plans.