

May 2, 2022

TO: RAILS Resource Sharing Committee
FROM: Anne Slaughter
SUBJECT: Find More Illinois update

Background

Find More Illinois was designed to assist libraries of all types and sizes in resource sharing, whether they are a standalone library or consortium member, and no matter what type of catalog software they use. The SHAREit software from Auto-Graphics combines the holdings of participating libraries into a single discovery platform that simplifies interlibrary loan requests for patrons, and provides a staff interface for request management and analytics. For some libraries, it can provide an affordable alternative to OCLC for interlibrary loan and/or as a source of cataloging records. The RAILS Board considers it a priority service of particular benefit to standalone libraries.

Pilot activities for Find More Illinois began in February 2018, with 21 libraries trained and going live in April 2018. Using feedback from the Find More Illinois Working Group, membership expansion beyond the pilot libraries began in late fall 2018 and continued through 2019. A major marketing push for additional expansion was planned for early 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent delivery shutdown, Find More Illinois was suspended for several months, and the marketing initiative was delayed. Additionally, due to pandemic-related budget concerns at member libraries, several members withdrew from participation in the 2020 and 2021 renewal process.

Membership growth incentive program

To generate the growth needed for Find More Illinois to realize its potential as a powerful and seamless statewide resource sharing option, we worked with Auto-Graphics to develop and offer a significant financial incentive program. For libraries that join before March 2023, all setup fees are waived. No annual fees will be billed for any participants (current and new) until July 1, 2023. We also hope to continue to offer more limited incentives in FY2023. A multifaceted promotional plan is well underway, including outreach to individual large and standalone libraries, personalized demos for interested libraries, and broad promotion through RAILS communication channels. Since the incentive program began, the following new libraries have signed on:

- Antioch Public Library District
- DeKalb Public Library
- Helen Plum Library
- Highwood Public Library
- Knoxville CUSD 202
- Ohio Public Library District
- Pinnacle Library Consortium (Fountaindale Public Library District, Joliet Public Library, Lemont Public Library District, Plainfield Public Library District, Shorewood-Troy Public Library District, and White Oak Library District)
- Skokie Public Library
- Waukegan Public Library
- Wheaton Public Library

Find More Illinois participation now stands at 49 libraries (as of late April), with many more quotes pending and additional libraries having expressed serious interest in joining. Any interested Illinois library can visit www.findmoreillinois.org to learn more and request a quote, and questions can be directed to info@findmoreillinois.org.

Union catalog transition

To resolve a confusing user experience with searching and the display of results, we have moved away from using the Z39.50 protocol to gather library holdings information. We now add participating library holdings to a union catalog via MARC record uploads, with routine updates. We are still able to display item status via Z39.50 for catalogs that support it. This change means that only one source is searched, and results are returned all at once, with no extra clicks needed to retrieve everything. Library staff who visited Find More Illinois prior to April 11, 2022 to test drive the search functionality may wish to try their test searches again now to see the improved user experience.

Enhanced borrowing

Enhanced Borrowing was rolled out in February. This optional and free service forwards borrower requests with the Unfilled status to RAILS' OCLC WorldShare account. RAILS staff place these requests in WorldShare and send received items to the requesting library. Library staff process these requests just like other FMI requests, returning the item to RAILS when the loan period ends. This no-cost option is available to any interested Find More Illinois members and is especially helpful for those without OCLC access.

Bibliographic records

One of SHAREit's native features is that library staff can download MARC records from participating collections for editing and upload into local catalogs. Auto-Graphics also offers an add-on service called MARCIt that provides additional sources of MARC records from large library systems and consortia in other states that have given permission to be included. This service is used successfully in several states that don't have the widespread OCLC membership among public libraries, including Pennsylvania. In response to library wishes to have an alternative to OCLC for cataloging, we will be exploring this service and other opportunities to offer lower-cost access to quality MARC records to our members.

Verso consortium for nonautomated libraries

Our existing contract with Auto-Graphics includes discounted pricing for all Illinois libraries for their Verso ILS product, and information about this discount is available on the RAILS website Deals & Discounts page. However, the costs of full-featured catalog software or LLSAP membership are still out of reach for some libraries, which hinders their participation in resource sharing. We recently asked Paul Cope, Auto-Graphics President, for Verso to be made available free of charge to nonautomated and under-automated libraries that join Find More Illinois. This will be a consortial implementation (working title of LIBRA: Libraries Integrated for Better Resource Access) with a limited and pre-defined set of policies and material types designed for qualifying small libraries with no ILS software, or that are using circulation software that isn't fully featured. Verso offers seamless integration with SHAREit, so libraries will be able to participate in Find More Illinois easily and affordably. We do not yet have a timeline for promotion or implementation but are moving forward with planning and have incorporated this project into the RAILS FY2023 budget and operational plan.

Interstate interlibrary loan

We are roughly targeting late 2022 for the implementation of Auto-Graphics Interstate Sharing Initiative to enable out-of-state borrowing and lending through SHAREit for libraries that opt in. As we plan to roll out this service, we will also explore the potential for delivery handoff with neighboring states that participate in ISSI, including Wisconsin and Missouri.