

# RAILS Report

---

## RAILS Strategic Plan: Strategic Goal 1

RAILS provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing for all member libraries.

**Objective 1: Enhance the sharing of knowledge and best practices through member networking and communications between all types of libraries.**

### Save the Date for September 29 RAILS Member Update

RAILS holds regular member updates to keep members informed about the latest RAILS news and other recent developments affecting libraries. The next update session will be Thursday, September 29 from 10 a.m. – noon. RAILS Board members are welcome to attend!

Deirdre Brennan will host the meeting in person at the RAILS Coal Valley service center and there will be a light lunch for Coal Valley attendees after the update session. Members can also attend at the RAILS Burr Ridge or East Peoria service centers or via Zoom. [Registration details are available on L2](#) and watch for an agenda closer to the date.

### Revisions to RAILS State of Resource Sharing Map

RAILS has a map that shows the [State of Resource Sharing](#) within our system, including consortia participation, public library standalone catalogs, and unserved areas. We are revising the map to reflect changes in consortia membership, library names, district boundaries, etc. made since 2019. We are aiming to have the revised map ready by sometime this fall.

### RAILS City Library Directors Networking Group Holds First Meeting

RAILS helped form a networking group for directors from city libraries to discuss common issues and challenges. The group held its first meeting in May and over 30 directors participated. They agreed to share board bylaws and memorandums of agreement and compiled a list of questions for RAILS' attorney. Betsy Adamowski from Wheaton Public Library is leading the group and RAILS will provide support as needed. We are pleased that Chicago Public Library Commissioner Chris Brown attends these meetings; it is a wonderful opportunity to expand our collaboration with CPL.

### RAILS Awards My Library Is... Grants to 20 School Libraries

Congratulations to the 20 RAILS school libraries that received a total of \$78,232.80 in [My Library Is... grants](#). These grants help recipients focus on projects that tell the library story and increase visibility and support for school libraries.

- Alan B. Shepard Middle School Learning Commons / Deerfield School District 109
- Beach Park Community Consolidated School District 3
- Burbank Elementary School / City of Chicago School District #299
- Coal City Middle School
- East Elementary School / Zion School District 6
- Glenside Middle School / Queen Bee Public Schools #16
- Grace Lutheran School, River Forest
- Hampshire High School
- Heyworth CUSD #4
- Highland Middle School, Libertyville
- John T. Pirie Fine Arts and Academic Center/ City of Chicago School District #299
- Medinah Elementary School District #11, Roselle
- Peoria PSD #150
- Riverside Brookfield Township District #208
- Roberto Clemente Community Academy / City of Chicago School District #299
- Rochelle Township High School District # 212
- Rondout School District 72, Lake Forest
- Summit Hill Junior High, Frankfort
- Wallin Oaks Elementary School / Plainfield CCSD 202
- Zion-Benton Township High School District 126

### Collaboration on RAILS Statewide Services

RAILS staff meet regularly with Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) staff to discuss RAILS programs/services available to all Illinois libraries, how libraries can take advantage of these resources, possible promotional activities, and additional collaboration opportunities. The June meeting focused on three of these programs/services: [inkie.org](#), [Explore More Illinois](#), and [Career Online High School](#).

### Save the Date for August 17 RAILS Back to School Fest

On the afternoon of August 17, RAILS will host a Back-to-School Fest to help our school library members get the most benefit from their RAILS membership. The 90-minute online forum will include short presentations by RAILS staff on system programs/services of interest to school libraries. All are welcome! Watch for more details and registration coming soon. A recording will also be available for those unable to make the session.

### **Chicago Area Solo Librarians (CASL) Networking Group Meeting, June 24**

RAILS is helping to relaunch the [CASL Networking Group](#). The group was created in 2001 and hasn't met for several years. Their primary purpose is to provide networking opportunities for solo librarians at specialized libraries throughout the RAILS region, not just in Chicago. Meetings will take place via Zoom.

### **AISLE Partnership**

RAILS staff meet monthly with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), and Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Gwen Harrison, Network Consultant at the Illinois State Library, also joined us for the April meeting. Topics discussed in July included recent library materials challenges and an update on RAILS efforts to gather better data about Illinois school libraries. The next meeting of the group is Tuesday, August 2 at 4 p.m.

***Objective 2: Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their users than libraries would be able to afford on their own.***

### **RAILS Discounts and Group Purchases Save Members Money!**

RAILS completed sign-up/renewals for several annual group purchases in June, including EBSCO databases and the ALA RDA Toolkit. The annual EBSCO database package group purchase now includes 161 libraries, public and K-12, and surpassed \$1 million dollars this year, an increase of \$438,000 (+70%) over last year. Forty-one additional libraries (28 publics and 13 schools) joined this group purchase. Thirty-five libraries renewed or joined the ALA RDA Toolkit group purchase, which totals over \$7,000.

RAILS members can find more information, trial access, and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the RAILS Deals & Discounts page.

### **New RAILS Discount on Brainfuse Online Tutoring and Study Suite**

[Brainfuse HelpNow](#) is a unique online tutoring and study suite for patrons of all ages. Tutors provide on-demand, one-to-one online live homework help. Students can get assistance with math, English, writing, science, and social studies. Teens and adults can benefit from tutoring in test prep, career services, digital literacy, and live Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) assistance.

### Career Online High School (COHS) Update

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program that enables libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas and career certificates in high-demand fields. RAILS coordinates and administers the program for libraries statewide and negotiates lower fees for the scholarships that participating libraries award to students. The following table provides the latest information on the program as of July 1.

| Scholarships Awarded | Total Graduates | Current Number of Students in Program | RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 317                  | 152             | 69                                    | 61%/53%                             |

### Sharing Best Practices on Consortial Group Purchasing

Leila Heath, RAILS Director of Library Resources & Programs, and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at the [Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois](#) (CARLI), met in June to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing. The two will continue to meet regularly to share ideas and best practices.

### RAILS Is a Project Partner for CARLI OER Grant

The Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) received a \$1.08 million grant for [Illinois SCOERs](#) (Support for Creation of Open Educational Resources). Work teams funded through competitive sub-grants will create a minimum of eight open textbooks. RAILS is a grant partner, and Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, recently helped review nine sub-grant applications.

### Latest eRead Illinois News

RAILS' [eRead Illinois Axis 360](#) collection includes e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and children with very reasonable pricing. RAILS is finalizing eRead Illinois renewals for FY 2023. As of July 6, 338 library agencies (school districts, main public library buildings, etc.) completed the renewal process. This figure does not include RSA libraries. (RSA is one of six RAILS-supported online catalog consortia.) We anticipate the total number of renewing agencies to total 475 once RSA libraries complete the process.

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, and a representative from Baker & Taylor, our eRead Illinois vendor, scheduled a webinar about scoping the eRead Illinois collection for school libraries. (The scoping feature allows schools to restrict student access to mature adult content.) The webinar will take place twice – on [August 30](#) and [September 1](#). We scheduled the webinar in response to the increased number of questions we've received about scoping in recent months.

Anna Behm also gave a virtual presentation in June to Elgin Community College (ECC) staff about eRead Illinois and related help resources. About five ECC staff members attended.

### Use of RAILS E-Resources

#### eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

| Time Period                        | E-Books | Audiobooks | Total   |
|------------------------------------|---------|------------|---------|
| June 2022                          | 15,894  | 14,121     | 30,015  |
| FY 2022<br>(July 2021 – June 2022) | 280,593 | 185,056    | 465,649 |

#### Inkie.org Library Views

| Time Period | Number of Views |
|-------------|-----------------|
| June 2022   | 1,766           |
| FY 2022     | 40,541          |

### Explore More Illinois

Through RAILS' [Explore More Illinois](#) online cultural and recreational pass program, cardholders at participating Illinois public libraries can take advantage of various discounts at museums, park districts, historical societies, zoos, art centers, recreational facilities, and other attractions.

RAILS covers the licensing cost for the software and there is no additional cost for libraries or attractions to participate. As of July 12, 408 Illinois libraries participate in the program (324 RAILS and 84 IHLS member libraries) and there are [48 attractions](#).

RAILS is working with the [Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois](#) (CARLI) and Illinois Central College (ICC) on a pilot program to allow community college libraries to join Explore More. In June, RAILS staff met with CARLI and ICC staff to discuss next steps, including which college library to pick as the next addition to the program.

New attractions added to Explore More in June include: the Dillon Home Museum in Sterling, the Rockford Art Museum, the Governor John Wood Mansion in Quincy, and two offers from

Galesburg Parks and Recreation for its water park and boat rental at Storey Lake. The most popular attractions in June were the Peoria Riverfront Museum, Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Wheels O' Time Museum in Dunlap, and Chicago Children's Museum.

Jessica Barnes and Stacy Palmisano from the RAILS staff visited Rockford attractions in June to shoot one of several proposed videos to highlight Explore More Illinois offers. Stacy is working on final edits, and we will share the video when completed.

***Objective 3: RAILS will continue to seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services***

**Changes to East Peoria Area Delivery Routes Begin August 1**

RAILS has been working with [GeoMARC](#) (formerly LASA) from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville to evaluate our East Peoria delivery operation. We have worked with GeoMARC many times in the past and respect their ability to provide creative and sound delivery routing recommendations.

Based on GeoMARC's evaluation, we are completely rerouting all East Peoria delivery locations beginning Monday, August 1. This change will make our operation more efficient by reducing four routes. It will also save RAILS an estimated \$35K to \$40K annually. These changes will in no way affect the high-quality delivery service libraries have come to expect from RAILS.

**Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Physical Delivery Meeting**

RAILS participated in the semi-annual meeting of organizations providing physical delivery in mid-June. The group, which includes organizations who provide in-house delivery as well as those who contract for service, offers valuable insight into the wider world of delivery efficiencies and challenges. Discussion included the use of efficiency focused tracking devices, experiences transitioning to automated handling, and the increased costs of delivery due to fuel, vehicle maintenance, and labor.

---

***Objective 4: Work collaboratively with members, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and the Illinois State Library to identify and support appropriate and affordable shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing to all libraries and residents.***

### **Find More Illinois**

[Find More Illinois](#) (FMI) connects participating standalone and shared online catalogs. Library patrons can search all these catalogs in a single search. All Illinois libraries are eligible to participate, regardless of size, type, or library software.

All setup fees are waived for libraries that join before March 2023 and no annual fees will be billed until July 1, 2023. RAILS is widely publicizing FMI so libraries can take advantage of this incentive offer. As a part of this effort, staff produced this [FMI video](#) with testimonials from current participants.

We are currently working to fill a new Consortial Services Supervisor position to oversee Find More Illinois as it expands membership and adds services. This role will also establish a new service that will provide nonautomated libraries with catalog software to aid their participation in resource sharing through Find More Illinois.

### **Universal Service and Multiple Listing Categories**

RAILS Universal Service Committee member Gail Bush has been working to have the Multiple Listing Service include a public library service category as part of real estate listings in the Midwest Real Estate Data service area. To move this process forward, RAILS provided a letter of support, and the Illinois Library Association, Illinois State Library, and Illinois Heartland Library System have all agreed to provide letters of support as well. RAILS greatly appreciates the collaborative support of our partner library organizations. The Universal Services committee will discuss this further at their June meeting.