

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.

RAILS Member Engagement at ILA and AISLE Conferences

RAILS had approximately 691 visitors to our exhibit booth at the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference on October 19 and 20. Thanks to all the RAILS Board members who stopped by to say hello. Special thanks to Rosie Camargo for working at the booth!

We had approximately 253 visitors to our booth at the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Conference on November 4. We developed a special handout highlighting RAILS' services for school libraries. School library staff who missed visiting the booth can find this information on the [RAILS website](#).

Poster Sessions at ILA Annual Conference

SWAN Executive Director, Aaron Skog, presented a poster session at ILA about [Illinois Library Resource Sharing: the Three Pillars](#). The presentation, which focuses on the importance of delivery, statewide participation in shared catalog solutions, and participation in LLSAPs can be viewed in full at the link above.

RAILS also presented a poster session at ILA Annual, focused on the [RAILS School Library Data Project](#). RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki presented on the challenges of collecting missing data related to Illinois school libraries and library workers, and shared the steps that RAILS is taking in order to find solutions and present an accurate glimpse into the reality of Illinois school libraries and their staff, collections, and finances.

New RAILS Website and Email List Software Scheduled to Debut in Early 2023

RAILS is in the midst of a website redesign. We anticipate going live with the new site by this Spring. The URL for the new site will be railslibraries.org. This will replace the current .info extension, which will continue to work while members adjust to the new URL. New support

sites for Find More Illinois and Explore More Illinois will likely go live around the same time. The new eRead Illinois support site will go live in the summer or early fall.

Much of the data migration for the new RAILS website has already taken place. Our contractor, Aten Design Group, is in the process of implementing the design. Aten is also working on building a new version of the Fast Facts survey creation tool.

Our installation of the LISTSERV email list software (which will replace the Mailman application currently in use) is substantially complete. We expect to add a few LISTSERV email lists for select member groups to test within the next month and are developing a migration plan for all existing Mailman lists.

RAILS Social Media Efforts Increase Member Engagement

RAILS is taking advantage of the continued popularity of social media to grow our member engagement efforts. Ola Gronski, who began working as RAILS' first Digital Marketing & Communication Specialist on November 7, is leading these efforts with help from other staff.

Facebook Analytics

Facebook engagement was up 57.2% in December, and our social media users are regularly commenting, reacting, and sharing to their own profiles.

Instagram Analytics

Instagram impressions were up 168% in December. More accounts are being exposed to RAILS content, whether or not they decide to follow us. This is great for brand awareness!

RAILS Library Chats on Challenged Materials

In December, RAILS held two online discussion sessions to address the current environment on materials challenges for academic, public, school, and specialized libraries. Tasha Squires, School Librarian at O'Neill Middle School in Downers Grove, led the sessions. Participants were invited to share their experiences responding to materials challenges either anonymously or at the session. Over 100 registered for the two events and around 40 people participated live. The sessions were not recorded.

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.

Swank Group Purchase Sign-Up Results

RAILS completed the sign-up and renewal for our [Swank](#) Movie Licensing USA public performance license group purchase in December. The total purchase of \$69,838 netted a savings of \$36,033 for the 159 participating public libraries, which include 94 renewing libraries and 65 new sign-ups. This year, Swank included an additional one-time 3% loyalty discount for libraries renewing their RAILS group purchase.

The annual license allows unlimited showings of thousands of movies, from classics to new releases. Select movies for outdoor viewings are also included in the license coverage for a limited time. The license is valid from January 1 - December 31, 2023.

BookBrowse Group Purchase Sign-Up Results

RAILS also completed the sign-up and renewal for our [BookBrowse for Libraries](#) group purchase in December. The total purchase of \$6,550 netted a savings of \$2,765 for the 15 participating public libraries. BookBrowse is an award-winning readers' advisory resource for librarians and patrons. The subscription runs from January 1 - December 31, 2023.

Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' statewide online cultural and recreational pass program.

As of December 31, 412 Illinois libraries participate (326 RAILS and 86 Illinois Heartland Library System libraries) and there are [49 attractions](#).

Patrons from participating libraries made 245 reservations in November and December. The most popular attractions during those two months (measured by number of reservations) were Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago (96), Chicago Children's Museum (30), Fox River Grove Memorial Public Library (27), DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (25), and Peoria Riverfront Museum (19).

In December, Explore More Illinois added the Fossil Ridge Public Library in Braidwood, with a discount offer for their January book sale. We also ended the year adding the German American Heritage Center and Museum in Davenport, IA, our first Iowa attraction.

In 2022, 832 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois, making it the most successful year ever for the program. The most popular attractions of 2022 were:

1. Peoria Riverfront Museum - 155 reservations
2. Chicago Children’s Museum - 124 reservations
3. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (Springfield) – 74 reservations
4. Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago) – 60 reservations
5. Anderson Japanese Gardens (Rockford) – 60 reservations

Patrons from the following libraries made the most Explore More Illinois reservations in 2022:

1. Fox River Grove Public Library District – 59 reservations
2. Peoria Public Library – 34 reservations
3. Morton Public Library District – 30 reservations
4. Alpha Park Public Library District – 29 reservations
5. Barrington Area Public Library District – 27 reservations

Career Online High School Update

[Career Online High School](#) (COHS) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program. 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 January 5.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
356	161	93	61%/53%

eRead Illinois Fee Structure Change

The current formula for determining member fees for [eRead Illinois](#) is 10 years old. Beginning July 1, RAILS is adjusting the fee to sustain a vibrant shared collection, and to ensure that every library is contributing equitably. One hundred percent of the annual fee goes to further developing the shared collection.

Fees for academic and school libraries will be based on enrollment, public library fees will be based on operation expenditures, and specialized library fees will be based on population served.

Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, and Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources & Programs, met individually with each of RAILS' [six shared catalog consortia](#) to discuss the fee structure change. They also met with the 33 libraries that will be most highly impacted by the change (24 school libraries, 7 public libraries, and 2 academic libraries).

Most of the meetings were positive, and libraries shared their appreciation for the eRead Illinois program and for advance notification of the change. They also provided additional helpful feedback. For example, many school libraries expressed an interest in gaining access to more popular titles translated into Spanish. Anna is working with Baker & Taylor on creating a plan for ordering more K-12 Spanish content as a result.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
November 2022	19,759	13,911	33,670
December 2022	18,883	14,334	33,217
FY 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023)	123,932	93,130	217,062

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
November 2022	1,148
December 2022	1,674
FY 2023	8,831

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

RAILS Service Centers

The lease is up at the RAILS Bolingbrook hub later this year and RAILS is investigating whether our current location is still the best space for our needs. Ten area properties have been

identified as potential alternatives. We should know more about how we plan to proceed later this spring.

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.

Statewide Online Trustee Development Portal

The Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) received a grant from the Illinois State Library to create an interactive trustee training portal. Once completed, the portal will be available to trustees statewide. IHLS created advisory and feedback committees to help develop and review content for the portal. Both committees consist of IHLS and RAILS system staff, system and library board members, and public library directors. RAILS representatives include:

Advisory Committee

Carolyn Kinsella, Trustee, Carlock Public Library District
Laura Long, Director, East Moline Public Library
Brian Shepard, Director, Indian Trails Public Library District
Becky Spratford, RAILS Board & Trustee, LaGrange Public Library
Tom Stagg, RAILS Board & Trustee, Alpha Park Public Library District
Joe Filapek, RAILS staff

Feedback Committee

Genna Buhr, Director, Fondulac Public Library District
Vanessa Villarreal, RAILS Board & Trustee, Lake Villa Public Library District
Monique Williams, Trustee, Harvey Public Library District
Monica Harris, RAILS staff

An initial meeting for both committees was held on January 10.

Planning Begins for 2023 Directors University and Directors University 2.0

Planning is underway for both Directors University and Directors University 2.0. Directors University will be held in the summer and is an intensive week-long training and networking event for first-time public library directors statewide. Directors University 2.0 invites back alumni from Directors University to explore new topics and expand on others (budgeting, HR, etc.). While DU 2.0 was originally planned to take place every other year, the overwhelming number of applicants in 2022 led to the decision to offer it again this year. DU 2.0 is tentatively scheduled for late April.

December and January Meetings with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL

RAILS has monthly meetings 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 the Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Topics discussed in December and January included RAILS' school library data project, materials challenges and the possible formation of a rapid response team to support libraries facing challenges, an online School Library Training Event (see next article), and overviews of the Cards for Kids Act and the Act expanding the Cards for Kids Act.

Fall 2023 Illinois School Library Training Event

RAILS is working with representatives from AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and the Illinois State Library to plan an online event for school library workers. A date has not yet been set. The event will be specifically designed for:

- Individuals who are working in school libraries with no formal library education
- Individuals with or without a teaching certificate
- Paraprofessionals
- Individuals considering getting a school library endorsement

RAILS Partnering with CARLI on SCOERs Grant

RAILS is a project partner for the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) [SCOERs \(Support for Creation of Open Educational Resources\) grant](#) to create open textbooks. Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, met with the SCOERs grant committee on December 12 to discuss next steps. Additional grant awardees were selected to create OER materials.