

# RAILS Report

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## **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 Involved with AISLE Annual Conference and ILA Annual Conference**

RAILS had a double booth at the October Illinois Library Association (ILA) conference. The booth featured live demos of different RAILS programs/services, including Find More Illinois, Explore More Illinois, inkie.org, eRead Illinois, Career Online High School, and L2 (Library Directory & Learning Calendar); a whiteboard where booth visitors could practice talking about their libraries by completing a sentence beginning with My Library Is...; opportunities to win four Barnes & Noble gift cards; and much more.

In addition, RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom presented at a panel session, “Crisis in Specialized Libraries”, RAILS Research Specialist Janette Derucki presented a poster session on the RAILS school library data project, and RAILS received the 2022 Robert R. McClarren Legislative Development Award. RAILS Board member Becky Spratford presented “Actively Anti-Racist Service to Leisure Readers: Foundations” and “Get On Board: Encouraging Library Workers to Run for Local Library and School Boards.” There was also a special reception to honor RAILS Executive Director Deirdre Brennan on her retirement.

RAILS was a Platinum Sponsor for the AISLE Conference, November 3 – 5, at the Tinley Park Convention Center and had a booth at the event. RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki and RAILS Data Analysis Manager Grant Halter presented a session on our school library data project: “By the Numbers: School Library Advocacy through Data.” They presented information about the project, including an overview, findings, advocacy efforts, and data tools, all in a fun Jeopardy format.

### **RAILS at Association of Rural and Small Libraries Conference**

Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources & Programs, and Diana Rusch, Consulting & Continuing Education Specialist, attended the ARSL (Association of Rural and Small Libraries) annual conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee in September. Leila met with vendors and

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attended several interesting programs and networking events. The conference was well-organized and provided many opportunities to connect with and learn from other libraries. Since RAILS has 219 member libraries who provide services to populations under 10,000, attending the conference helped us stay attune to the issues facing these libraries.

### **RAILS on the Road**

Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom has a goal to visit 20 RAILS member libraries by the end of the year. He's particularly interested in visiting libraries that have not had a RAILS staff member visit in the past two years (including virtual visits), and/or libraries that:

- Do not participate in Find More Illinois
- Do not participate in eRead Illinois
- Do not participate in Explore More Illinois
- Do not participate in a shared catalog
- Do not have a staff member on the RAILS Board or a board subcommittee

Any library type (academic, public, school, or special) can request a visit via the RAILS website. Dan is looking forward to speaking with directors, managers, and/or front-line staff about L2, continuing education, grants, RAILS e-resources, and more, and to hearing about what is happening at our member libraries.

### **RAILS September 29 Member Update Recording Available**

The recording from the September 29 RAILS Member Update is now available on the RAILS YouTube page. Topics include updates on new and proposed legislation, including filling public library trustee vacancies, RAILS' Statewide Access to Online Resources proposal, the Cards for Kids Act, and the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act. We also gave updates on our strategic plan and RAILS services and activities, and shared information about our School Library Data Project.

### ***Decennial Committees on Local Government Consolidation and Efficiency Act Guidance***

Public Act 102-1088 requires governmental units such as public library districts to establish a committee to study local efficiencies and report recommendations to their county board. The Ancel Glink law firm provided RAILS with an [FAQ to answer initial questions](#)

### **RAILS Participates in REALM Symposium**

Monica Harris, RAILS Associate Executive Director, recently attended the virtual REALM (Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums) Symposium. The two-day event focused on community resilience, health equity, the importance of trustworthiness, and the REALM Crisis

Management Toolkit. About 150 representatives from a variety of cultural heritage institutions, public health, and other organizations were invited to participate and contribute.

### **AISLE Partnership**

RAILS had our monthly meeting with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), and Illinois State Library (ISL) on October 4 to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Topics included an update on RAILS' school library data project, the upcoming ILA and AISLE conferences, materials challenges, and the possibility of holding a virtual Directors University type event for school libraries in 2023.

**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 and Renewal**

Swank Movie Licensing USA offers RAILS public libraries a special, discounted rate for their annual public performance license. RAILS public libraries currently participating in the RAILS group purchase or libraries not covered by a Swank license must renew/sign up for the group purchase by November 30, 2022. Library staff can visit the RAILS Deals & Discounts page and log in using their L2 email and password to view pricing for their library and to opt-in to the deal. The license is valid from January 1 - December 31, 2023.

### **BookBrowse for Libraries Sign-Up and Renewal**

BookBrowse for Libraries is an award-winning readers' advisory resource for library staff and patrons. Libraries must renew/sign up for the group purchase by December. For further information and pricing, libraries can visit the RAILS Deals & Discounts page. The RAILS group annual subscription begins on January 1, 2023.

### **Creativebug Discounted Pricing Announced**

Creativebug is a craft education hub for every skill level. Patrons have an all-access, no-boundaries pass to explore thousands of classes. People of all skill levels can work alongside instructors to learn craft techniques. RAILS members can find information and pricing on all our deals and discounts by logging into the RAILS Deals & Discounts page.

### Explore More Illinois Update

Explore More Illinois is RAILS’ statewide online cultural and recreational pass program. As of October 11, 410 Illinois libraries participate (325 RAILS and 85 Illinois Heartland Library System libraries) and there are 48 attractions.

In September and early October, Explore More Illinois added the DuPage Symphony Orchestra in Naperville and the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.

A total of 41 reservations were made in September. The most popular attractions in September measured by number of reservations were the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (8), Peoria Riverfront Museum (6), Chicago Children’s Museum (6), Fox River Grove Memorial Public Library (4) and Wheels O’ Time Museum in Dunlap (3).

Lincoln Land Community College is the second community college to join Explore More Illinois through our pilot program (Illinois Central College was the first). They are beginning to promote the program to students and staff.

### Career Online High School (COHS) Update

[Career Online High School](#) 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 October 1.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
350	157	95	62%/53%

### Sharing Best Practices on Consortial Group Purchasing

Leila Heath, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs, had several recent meetings with other

system/consortia staff involved with discounts/group purchasing, including:

- July meeting with Califa (California), Florida Virtual Campus, Midwest Collaborative for Library Services, and OhioNet. This group meets bi-monthly.
- August meeting with Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources, at the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)
- August meeting with Cassandra Thompson, Director of the Illinois Heartland Library System’s SHARE (Sharing Heartland’s Available Resources Equally) automation consortium

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### Latest eRead Illinois News

RAILS' [eRead Illinois Axis 360](#) collection includes e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and children with very reasonable pricing. Baker & Taylor, our eRead vendor, continues to work through residual issues from the ransomware attack they experienced in August (see last month's RAILS Board report). RAILS staff can add items to the eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection, however, there have been delays acquiring titles before their publish date as well as accessing interactive dashboard reports. Baker & Taylor continues to work on resolving these issues.

### Use of RAILS E-Resources

#### eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
September 2022	24,396	16,651	41,047
FY 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023)	61,353	47,834	109,187

#### Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
September 2022	1,733
FY 2023	4,730

### Explore More Illinois Update

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Lincoln Land Community College is the second community college to join Explore More Illinois through our pilot program (Illinois Central College was the first). They are beginning to promote the program to students and staff.

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

**Tour of RAILS Bolingbrook Delivery Hub**

The LACONI (Library Administrators Conference of Northern Illinois) Circulation Services section contacted RAILS about a tour of our Bolingbrook delivery hub for interested library circulation staff. Delivery and Facilities Director Mark Hatch met with a LACONI representative to discuss specifics and a possible tour in the fall. RAILS Delivery is always excited to show off what they do for interested members. For more information (including behind the scenes videos of a RAILS Delivery hub), check out the RAILS website.

**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.**

**New Find More Illinois Video with User Testimonials**

Find More Illinois is an interlibrary loan platform that provides access to a growing number of library holdings in one seamless interface. Anyone can search the holdings, and users from participating libraries can locate and request materials from libraries across Illinois to be delivered directly to their home library. Libraries of all types and sizes can join, no matter what kind of catalog software they use.

Nicole Zimmermann, RAILS Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, produced a second video highlighting the benefits of the Find More Illinois software, including ease of use and time-saving features. It's a great time for libraries to join Find More Illinois. Setup fees will be waived for those joining before March 2023, and no annual fees will be billed until July 1, 2023.

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### 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

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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

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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.