
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.

Meet and Greets and Networking events with RAILS Executive Director

RAILS has scheduled a series of in-person meetings intended to introduce the new RAILS Executive Director, Monica Harris, to the membership. It is an opportunity to share the general vision and future of RAILS as well as opportunities for questions and feedback. These meetings are targeted in the areas of: Bourbonnais, Burr Ridge, Coal Valley, Algonquin, Peoria, Quincy, and Rockford.

In addition to our Meet and Greet events, Monica Harris has also been attending networking group meetings, delivery hub meetings with staff, and site visits with RAILS Board members.

Here is an overview of those in-person visits since Monica began her role as Executive Director in February:

- March 6: New Lenox Public Library Site Visit
- March 10: Bolingbrook Delivery Visit
- March 14: Meet & Greet at Bourbonnais Public Library
- March 15: Forest Park Public Library Site Visit
- March 20: Meet & Greet at RAILS Burr Ridge
- March 22: Shorewood-Troy Public Library Site Visit
- March 22: Fossil Ridge Library Site Visit
- April 5: Meet & Greet at Fondulac District Library (East Peoria)
- April 5: Peoria Public Library Site Visit
- April 6: Alpha Park Public Library Site Visit
- April 6: East Peoria Delivery Visit
- April 14: Tri-County Directors meeting at Prairie Creek Library (Dwight)

Meet and Greet and Networking events with RAILS Executive Director (cont.)

April 19: Association of Rural Community Directors at Tremont District Library

April 22: Helen Plum Library (Lombard) Site Visit

April 24: Former NSLS Directors Networking Meeting at Barrington Area Library

April 27: Coal Valley Delivery Visit

April 27: Meet & Greet at RAILS Coal Valley

April 28: Rock Island Public Library Watts-Midtown Branch Site Visit

Additional meetings are scheduled for May 2023 and beyond. We'll offer an updated report at the next Resource Sharing Committee meeting.

25 School Libraries Apply for My Library Is... Grants

RAILS periodically offers My Library Is... Grants to our school libraries to help them tell their story and increase visibility and support for school libraries in general. In the most current round of grants, RAILS received 25 applications with a total requested amount of \$83,499.85. A team of school library workers will review and score the grants and final decisions will be made by mid-April.

SPARKS Podcast with Chicago Public Library Commissioner Chris Brown

RAILS Executive Director, Monica Harris had the opportunity to sit down with Chicago Public Library Commissioner Chris Brown to discuss their Book Sanctuary project, which provides opportunities to expand local access to banned or challenged books. Chicago Public Library is also encouraging other libraries and individuals to consider establishing their own [Book Sanctuaries](#) through the project. Through the course of the [podcast interview](#) we also discussed Chicago Public Library's 150th Anniversary Celebration and the great collaboration happening between RAILS and CPL.

RAILS Members Benefit from Adler Planetarium IMLS Grant

RAILS will soon receive a large number of solar viewers that will be distributed to member libraries later this spring via RAILS Delivery. They are provided through an [IMLS \(Institute of Museum and Library Services\) grant](#) awarded to Adler Planetarium, a RAILS member. Planetarium staff will also present workshops at three RAILS locations this summer to help libraries prepare for eclipse events in October 2023 and April 2024.

SLA Illinois Networking Event at Shorefront Legacy Center

The Special Libraries Association Illinois Community is hosting an in-person tour of the [Shorefront Legacy Center](#) in Evanston, Wednesday, August 16 from 3 - 4 p.m. The Center collects, preserves, and educates people on Black history on Chicago's suburban North Shore. All Illinois library staff and trustees are welcome. [Register via Eventbrite](#).

[RAILS at Reaching Forward South Conference](#)

Brian Smith, Applications & Web Developer, staffed the RAILS table at [Reaching Forward South](#) in O'Fallon, Illinois on April 14. Due to the location of the conference, few RAILS members attended, but we had the opportunity to promote RAILS statewide services to Illinois Heartland Library System attendees. There were 32 visitors to the RAILS booth.

[RAILS Visit to High School Library Networking Group](#)

RAILS Board member Monica Tolva Caldicott invited Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom to speak at the North Suburban High School Library Networking Group meeting on April 27.

[Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center Tour](#)

The Special Libraries Association Illinois Community organized an in-person tour of the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center in March. The event was open to all Illinois library staff. Six people participated.

[April RAILS Member Library Visit](#)

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, visited Lake Park East High School, the sibling to Lake Park West High School (which Dan visited in February). Lake Park East serves first-year students and sophomores from Roselle, Medinah, Bloomingdale, Itasca, Wood Dale, Keeneyville, and Hanover Park.

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.

[New Hiveclass Discount and Webinar](#)

RAILS is offering a new discount for Hiveclass. This youth sports digital encyclopedia offers access to over 1,500 educational videos covering 15 sports/activities, including soccer, dance, fitness, basketball, yoga, mindfulness, and more. Members can [register for an informational webinar](#) on May 16 at 11 a.m.

[RDA Toolkit Group Purchase Sign-up and Renewal](#)

RDA: Resource Description & Access is an international standard for the creation of library and cultural heritage metadata. RDA Toolkit's subscription-based online platform allows catalogers from all types and sizes of libraries to create their own metadata. New sign-ups and renewals are due by June 1.

EBSCO Packages for Public and K-12 Libraries, Learning Express, FinancialFit

EBSCO packages for public libraries and EBSCO packages for K-12 libraries include a variety of core databases and additional options, including Learning Express, Library Aware, and the new FinancialFit. New sign-ups and renewals are due by June 1.

Explore More Illinois Update

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

As of April 11, 419 Illinois libraries participate: 328 RAILS public libraries and two community colleges (Illinois Community College and Oakton Community College), and 88 Illinois Heartland Library System public libraries and one community college (Lincoln Land Community College). There are [54 attractions](#).

RAILS staff met with staff from the Oakton Community College Library in January. Oakton will be the third community college to join our pilot program.

Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian, hosted the first-ever Explore More Illinois Networking Group Meeting in February, with 15 people attending. We plan on having the next meeting in May. Jessica also gave two presentations with Chicago Public Library (CPL) staff to current CPL/Museum in the Parks attractions. A total of 35 people attended the two sessions.

Patrons from participating libraries made 248 reservations in March. The most popular attractions (by number of reservations) were the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago (70), DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (37), Chicago Children’s Museum (32), Discovery Center Museum in Rockford (25), and Fox River Grove Memorial Public Library (22).

Migrating attractions from Chicago Public Library’s paper museum pass program into Explore More Illinois was a focus in March and April. So far, seven attractions have submitted offers.

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

Career Online High School Update

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

The following table provides the latest information on the use of the program as of April 1:

| Scholarships Awarded | Total Graduates | Current Number of Students in Program | RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 372 | 165 | 95 | 60%/53% |

eRead Illinois Fee Structure Change

The eRead Illinois Axis 360 renewal period began in March and runs through May. As of April 14, 592 libraries have renewed, including 330 school libraries, 236 public libraries, 20 academic libraries, and 6 specialized libraries. There have been 27 new signups, including 21 school libraries, 5 public libraries, and 1 academic library.

RAILS continues to purchase popular e-books and audiobooks in Spanish for the eRead Illinois collection in response to member feedback. As of April 11, 381 items have been added to the collection.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

| eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts Time Period | E-Books | Audiobooks | Total |
|---|---------|------------|---------|
| March 2023 | 21,497 | 17,141 | 38,638 |
| FY 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023) | 190,347 | 143,783 | 334,131 |

| Inkie.org Library Views Time Period | Number of Views |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| March 2023 | 2,199 |
| FY 2023 | 15,879 |

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

RAILS Delivery Video Training Series

Have questions about RAILS delivery? Check out the new [RAILS Delivery Training Series](#). The five videos are short and address the delivery topics members ask about most. There’s even a video on how to get further support from RAILS Delivery.

Delivery App and iPad Rollout

RAILS IT staff developed an iPad app for delivery drivers to move pages of handwritten documentation and item counts into an app that makes it possible to aggregate and analyze real-time maintenance and route data, as well as handle incident reporting. This multi-year collaborative project between IT and delivery staff involved identifying feature requirements, planning and executing the development phases for the app itself, purchasing iPads and necessary peripherals, and planning training and ongoing support. Rollout began with an initial pilot of the app and iPads with delivery staff in Bolingbrook, and we are in the process of expanding the program to all RAILS delivery hubs.

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 Update

[Find More Illinois](#) (FMI) connects participating libraries' standalone and shared online catalogs. All Illinois libraries are eligible to participate, regardless of their size, type, or library software. As an incentive to participation, all setup fees are waived for libraries that join before January 2024. Additionally, no annual fees will be billed until July 1, 2023.

FMI is growing quickly, which makes it a better resource for all participating libraries. During 2022, FMI grew by 39% with the addition of 21 libraries. New participants since the April 2022 board report include Erie CUSD #1, Fountaindale Public Library District, Geneseo SD #228, Joliet Public Library, Lemont Public Library District, Oswego Public Library District, Paw Paw Public Library District, Plainfield Public Library District, Richard A. Mautino Memorial Library, Shorewood-Troy Public Library District, Skokie Public Library, Vernon Hills CHSD #128, Warren Township Public Library, and White Oak Library District.

Successful Directors University 2.0 Event Held in Springfield

Directors University 2.0 took place in April in Springfield. Forty Illinois public library directors (27 from RAILS) who previously attended either Directors University or SPLMI (Statewide Public Library Management Institute) participated in this three-day intensive training and networking event. Joe Filapek, RAILS Consulting & CE Director, served on the planning committee.

Topics covered included budgeting, HR, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), capital improvement planning, self-care, and succession planning. Illinois State Library Director Greg McCormick spoke about recent legislation and its potential impact on libraries. Directors University will be held August 1-3 in Springfield for new public library directors.

Feb, March, and April Meeting 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.

Meeting topics included an update on RAILS' school library data project, materials challenges and the possible formation of a Regional Rapid Response Team to help libraries facing challenges, and a fall online training event for those working in school libraries with no formal library education. The next meeting of the group is May 2.

Joint Staff Meeting with Illinois Heartland Library System

Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) Executive Director Leslie Bednar and Monica Harris have started preliminary planning around a joint staff meeting in Springfield this year. This one-day meeting will allow for additional collaboration around shared goals and needs from member libraries and should also allow staff with similar roles the opportunity to talk with and learn from one another. We are grateful to the Illinois State Library for offering to host the meeting at the Illinois State Library.

SimplyE Pilot Project Update

RAILS has been a partner organization for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) [SimplyE for Consortia: Three Clicks to All Your E-books](#) grant project. SimplyE was intended to offer single sign-on access to multiple e-book platforms (Overdrive, eRead Illinois Axis 360, and Bibliotheca Cloud Library).

Several years ago, [Minitex](#) and RAILS collaborated to set up a handful of RAILS libraries as a pilot project to test the system. SimplyE stalled in 2021 due to development issues and lack of community-wide direction. After discussion with RAILS in January, Minitex notified the test libraries that the SimplyE servers will be shut down on March 1. Libraries interested in a similar solution can consider [the Palace Project](#), managed by Lyrasis and [DPLA](#) (Digital Public Library of America).