

RAILS Support to Shared Catalog Consortia

November 2023

What is a Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAP)?

The term is unique to Illinois and formally defined in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030: “Local Library System Automation Program means an integrated library system open to membership by full library system members of all types developed by or receiving financial or in kind support from a library system.” The RAILS Board-approved LLSAP Definition expands on this.

In layperson’s terms, an LLSAP is a group of libraries that shares catalog software, also known as a consortium or network, and uses that software to easily share their collections with each other. Each of the six LLSAP organizations in the RAILS service area are operated independently and governed by representatives from their member libraries, which are also RAILS members.

What is the relationship between LLSAPs and RAILS?

When online catalogs first became available, regional library systems were urged to start consortial catalogs. Some were established as system departments while others were formed independently. The landscape has shifted many times through the decades, but there has always been a close relationship between library systems and shared catalog consortia.

Participation in a shared catalog consortium helps libraries meet the expectations of RAILS membership ([23 ILAC 3030.200](#)) by expanding access to resources for their own patrons and facilitating the free and easy sharing of their collections with the patrons of other libraries. RAILS is in turn responsible for working to ensure sustainable, equitable resource sharing opportunities for all member libraries. In addition to systems providing operational support specifically to LLSAPs, system delivery allows Illinois libraries to engage in high volumes of interlibrary loan without having to cover shipping costs.

Illinois Library Laws and Rules

RAILS’s [mission statement](#) “We Connect Libraries” echoes the Illinois Library System Act’s ([75 ILCS 10/1](#)) founding directive to “encourage cooperation among all types of libraries in promoting the sharing of library resources.” The Library System Act established [ILLINET](#), a network of libraries comprised of all regional library system members that form the foundation for statewide resource sharing.

[Illinois Administrative Code 3030.215](#) further defines encouraging LLSAP participation and addressing barriers to participation, including affordability, as core standards for the services that multitype regional library systems provide to our member libraries.

RAILS Strategic Plan

RAILS’s [Strategic Plan](#) addresses support to LLSAPs in Goal 1 (“RAILS provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing for all member libraries”), 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.”

RAILS Board Consortia Committee

The Consortia Committee establishes a connection between RAILS and LLSAP organizations at the governance level, and facilitates input into RAILS activities impacting LLSAPs, along with interconnections and collaborations among the groups.

Who participates in LLSAPs?

About 37% of RAILS libraries belong to a shared catalog consortium; 32% are LLSAP members. The total below also includes 63 members of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois’ (CARLI) I-Share, a statewide shared catalog operated by the University of Illinois System. The rest are “standalone” – they either maintain their own catalog software or are non-automated and do not currently have a library catalog. LLSAPs primarily serve public libraries, but also include academic, school, and special libraries.

| RAILS Libraries | # of Agencies | % of RAILS Membership |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Consortium members | 456 | 37% |
| Standalone catalogs | 663 | 54% |
| Nonautomated libraries | 114 | 9% |

Totals are aggregated from multiple self-reported sources and small discrepancies may exist.

While RAILS encourages LLSAP membership as an excellent way for libraries to participate in resource sharing, it is not a requirement, and is one of multiple options a library can assess when making this local decision. RAILS supports our members sharing their resources in whatever manner allows each individual agency to share as generously and sustainably as they are able.

What do LLSAPs do?

Core services and benefits provided to participating libraries:

- Shared ILS software – often very expensive, labor intensive to manage
- Shared management and increased negotiating and buying power with vendors
- Shared collections – all member libraries share MOST of their materials

Some groups’ service offerings are more limited, while others offer additional services like centralized cataloging, training, extensive consulting, additional software products, and networking opportunities. These vary widely depending on size, library needs, revenue, and staffing levels. Each LLSAP assesses annual participation fees to their members and determines these fees using varying methods.

Where are the LLSAPs?

LLSAPs generally serve libraries in specific geographic areas reflecting previous regional library system boundaries or other regional groupings, and collectively cover the entire RAILS service area. The Resource Sharing Map does not reflect membership changes since 2019, but still serves as a roughly accurate illustration of LLSAP service areas.

Below is a summary of current LLSAP participation, including libraries in the process of joining during FY2024. More information about each LLSAP and their services can be found on their websites linked below.

| LLSAP | Public | School | Academic | Special | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 31 |
| Pinnacle Library Cooperative | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| PrairieCat | 92 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 102 |
| Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA) | 95 | 41 | 3 | 1 | 140 |
| Rock River Library Consortium | 4 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| SWAN | 95 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 101 |
| Total | 324 | 59 | 7 | 3 | 393 |

How does RAILS support LLSAPs?

RAILS supports LLSAPs primarily through two grant programs that provide funding for LLSAP operations and membership growth. This support has evolved throughout our efforts to adapt to significant and ongoing changes in the consortial landscape, resolve longstanding structural inequities, and ensure services are preserved regardless of the state of RAILS funding.

LLSAP Support Grant

This grant distributes about \$2.25M of RAILS funds annually via a mix of financial support and services. The funding is allocated using a formula that is calculated as a part of the grantmaking process. LLSAPs opting to receive only financial support receive their entire allocation in quarterly payments. If the LLSAP opts to receive any services, the cost of providing those services is deducted from its allocation. RAILS does not place restrictions on how LLSAPs use our financial support, provided the LLSAP can demonstrate the benefit to the consortium or its member libraries, and the financial sustainability of the LLSAP is enhanced.

FY2025 awards were announced to the LLSAPs in October 2023. Because many of the LLSAPs' budget development processes are well underway by late October, the awards are made before the RAILS budget process and are conditioned on the availability of funding.

RAILCAR Data

RAILS collects key data about each LLSAP as a part of the LLSAP Support Grant application so we can determine grant awards via the support formula and analyze basic data points across the standardized [zILLANE report](#). The RAILCAR instrument piloted with the FY2025 application

expands on this data collection and will provide for broader analysis of quantitative and qualitative data related to LLSAP operations and member libraries, with a focus on supporting library assessment of the affordability and sustainability of LLSAP membership.

Catalog Membership Grant

[This program](#) helps make LLSAP participation attainable for any eligible RAILS member library by offsetting many of the one-time expenses required to join, including vendor services and necessary technology. Eligible libraries must work directly with LLSAP staff as a partner in planning the project and gathering the information needed for the application. The application is designed to provide enhanced guidance to non-automated and under-automated libraries through the basic steps needed to assess their options and ongoing financial responsibilities, plan the project, complete and submit the application, and meet reporting and other grant requirements. Consultation from RAILS staff is available throughout the process.

The amount budgeted for this grant fluctuates from year to year. We typically request information from the LLSAPs regarding approximate costs for potential incoming members and try to allocate funding as generously as the budget allows. Since FY2015, this grant program has made 73 awards totaling \$1.84M, supporting 70 individual libraries and three group migrations. As of mid-November 2023, there is an additional \$140,562 in requests from three libraries pending review. The final deadline for FY2024 funding is April 15, 2024.

RAILS LLSAP GOAL AND DEFINITION

Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAP) is a term used statewide and rooted in historical relationships between the regional library systems and consortia. 23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030 states: “Local Library System Automation Program means an integrated library system open to membership by full library system members of all types developed by or receiving financial or in kind support from a library system.”

The RAILS Board first approved a more detailed RAILS LLSAP definition on March 23, 2012, following work by the RAILS LLSAP Task Force. (The task force has since been replaced by the RAILS Consortia Committee.) The following revision was fully approved on January 22, 2016.

RAILS LLSAP SUPPORT GOAL

To foster resource sharing and make a library management system affordable for any interested member library, RAILS’ goal is to support shared catalog consortia in its service area. To enrich existing relationships while promoting collaborative ventures with new partners, the RAILS Board has approved this definition of LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs):

RAILS LLSAP DEFINITION

Local Library System Automation Programs are shared library management systems that are supported by RAILS and that are open to membership by all types and sizes of RAILS member libraries. All LLSAPs affiliated with RAILS:

- 1) Support members whose primary service point is within the RAILS service area (Although non-RAILS members may belong to an LLSAP, they will not be included in allocation of RAILS support.)
- 2) Operate in a reciprocal contractual partnership with RAILS
- 3) Are supported by RAILS through in-kind and/or financial support
- 4) Maintain policies that broaden resource sharing throughout RAILS’ service area
- 5) Foster cooperation to support RAILS’ mission and to make library management systems affordable for every interested member library in RAILS, regardless of type or size
- 6) Work together to ensure the ability of all LLSAPs to meet the needs of their members, to increase the use of shared online catalogs by RAILS members, and to develop services that will further resource sharing throughout RAILS by providing staff, technical expertise, and assistance when needed

RAILS LLSAP definition—Revision approved by the Consortia Futures Subcommittee on November 9, 2015; by the Consortia Committee on January 18, 2016; and by the RAILS Board on January 22, 2016

RAILS Consortia Committee

Membership

Committee Members:

Two (2) RAILS Board Members

Representatives from each shared catalog within RAILS that chooses to participate (Maximum 2)

Ex officio members include the RAILS Board President; RAILS Executive Director; RAILS Director, Technology Services; one representative from the Illinois State Library; and one representative from the Illinois Heartland Library System, as designated by the IHLS Executive Director.

The RAILS Board President shall annually appoint two voting members from the RAILS board. Each consortium shall annually designate one voting representative and optionally one alternate who may vote in the absence of the voting representative. Appointment of representatives for successive terms is strongly encouraged to provide more continuity. The representative does *not* need to be an officer on the consortium's board. New representatives are seated at the first meeting after the beginning of the RAILS fiscal year in July. Interim appointments may be made when necessary to fill vacant seats. Voting representatives and alternates are encouraged to attend all meetings to ensure excellent communication and information flow.

Quorum and Voting

A quorum consists of the majority of voting members. Ex officio members do not count towards a quorum and do not vote.

Charge

The committee will investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase consortial services in Illinois, particularly among member libraries in RAILS, to provide the best library services to Illinois residents and optimize the use of tax dollars. This includes:

- Serving as a means of communication among consortia and with RAILS
- Making recommendations on how RAILS can support consortia to ensure continuity of services, enhance services to consortial members, make membership more affordable, promote the advantages of consortial membership, and foster cost-effective resource sharing among Illinois libraries
- Provide feedback on consortial implications of other RAILS projects, such as authentication needs for vendor offerings through group purchases
- Discuss current and emerging trends and technologies that may affect shared catalog consortia
- Work together to ensure consortia provide cost effective and efficient services to libraries

RAILS Consortia Committee Charge | Revision approved by the RAILS Board on September 27, 2019. (Previous revisions approved by the RAILS Board on May 27, 2016 and November 17, 2017. Originally approved by the RAILS Board on June 21, 2013.)

- Creating and overseeing working groups as needed on specific topics related to consortia, such as:
 - Collaborative approaches to shared needs, such as cataloging, training and documentation
 - Costs and benefits of multiple integrated library system platforms
 - Research on specific emerging technologies

Working Groups

After the Consortia Committee determines the need for a working group, the committee shall develop and approve a charge for the working group that includes guidelines for membership and the time period. Working group membership need not be limited to Consortia Committee members and need not include representatives from all consortia. Representatives from libraries with standalone integrated library systems may be included when needed based on the working group's charge. RAILS will be represented by at least one ex officio member.

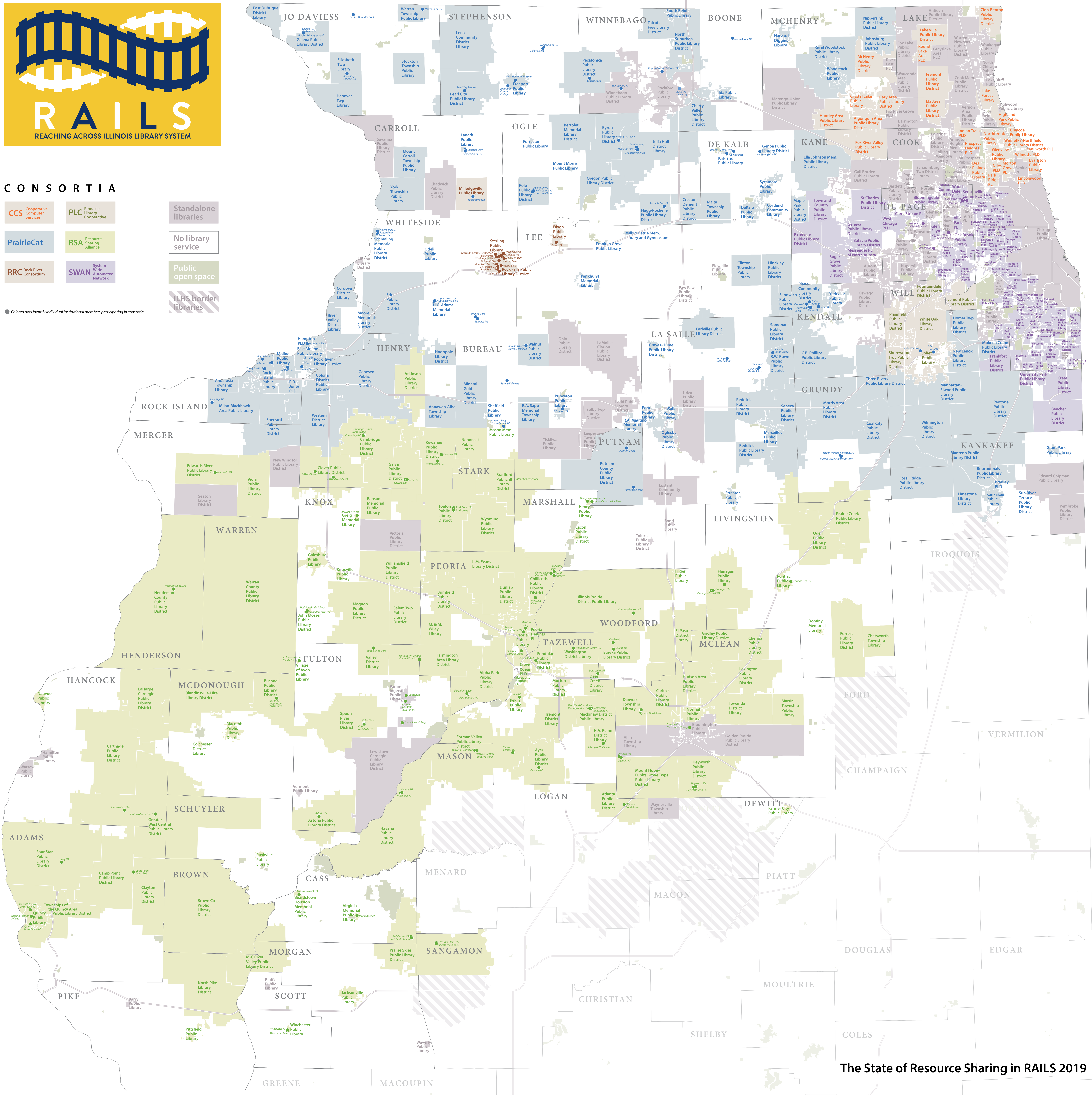
The Consortia Committee chairperson will appoint working group members and designate the group's chairperson. Members serve for the entire period of the working group.



CONSORTIA

| | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| CCS Cooperative Computer Services | PLC Pinnacle Library Cooperative | Standalone libraries |
| PrairieCat | RSA Resource Sharing Alliance | No library service |
| RRC Rock River Consortium | SWAN System Wide Automated Network | Public open space |
| | | ILHS border libraries |

Colored dots identify individual institutional members participating in consortia.



The State of Resource Sharing in RAILS 2019

Map by ChicagoCamGraphics