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Executive Director Report, February 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the most recent Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee meeting on February 5th. Lobbyist Derek Blaida highlighted important deadlines for the state legislature, including the deadline (February 9) for filing clean bills that can be considered in this legislative session and Governor Pritzker's address to introduce his proposed budget for fiscal year 2025 on Wednesday, February 21.

Blaida also highlighted additional bills for the committee that ILA is watching closely:

[HB2401](#): Reintroduced from last legislative session. Amends the school code and requires that books included in any course include diverse authors. Includes school board level control of reading material. Has been assigned to the elementary and Secondary Education School Curriculum and Policies committee.

[HB4567](#): Amends the criminal code to include library employees as protected in relation to threats and disorderly conduct. Has been referred to Rules Committee.

[SB173](#): Amends Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act. Provides an employer who engages in electronic monitoring to give notice to employees. Has been Re-assigned to Judiciary.

[SB2787](#): Amends the Illinois Local Library Act and the Public Library District Act of 1991. Requires competitive bidding for contracts in excess of \$35,000 (rather than \$25,000) for specified improvements and equipment purchases. Was postponed after being assigned to Local Government.

There is also support for another legislative priority from ILA to change the amount required for a treasurer bond from 50% of operating budget to 10%. This has support from a legislator and was expected to be filed. We hope to have a bill number soon.

ILA has published a list of the bills they are [monitoring](#) if you have an interest in following these changes.

Support for Libraries on Public Act 103-0100

As we have discussed, [Public Act 103-0100](#) became effective on January 1. While most member libraries have not reported any difficulties in complying with these changes, we are continuing to monitor how they are affected. We have heard from some school libraries with their questions about compliance after a letter from the Illinois State Library was sent out to them last month. We have continued to reiterate that Public Act 103-0100 details the conditions for their eligibility for state grants but does not affect system membership.

We are working on an additional communication piece for libraries, including school libraries, detailing the efforts they can take to be compliant with the changes.

CARLI, IHLS, and RAILS Open Letter on Digital Equity

As part of the continuing collaboration between CARLI, IHLS, and RAILS on issues of broadband access and digital equity, we published a joint letter on January 31 to the Illinois Office of Broadband regarding the Illinois Digital Equity Plan. Included is the reasoning for libraries as important partners in the state's efforts to achieve digital equity, including already existing core efforts of libraries for affected populations throughout the state. The letter, and many other valuable resources on this topic can be found at BroadbandforLibraries.com

School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) Dashboard Launch

After years of partnership and data collection, RAILS has launched the SLATE School Library Data Commons, an online tool to view information about school libraries in Illinois. This is a valuable tool for understanding and advocating for school libraries and their staff. You can view the [School Library Data Commons](#) through the RAILS website [SLATE page](#).

Models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion

Freedom Lifted Justice at Work Course

We want to ask for your assistance in helping us to promote the [Freedom Lifted](#) training available to all RAILS members. We will be widely promoting this asynchronous training program, which allows individuals to learn the core of equity, diversity, and inclusion foundations in libraries, throughout the month. RAILS staff are meeting regularly to discuss their learning and share their insights with one another. We encourage all RAILS members to check out this valuable tool.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

RSA Independence Project

RSA Executive Director Kendal Orrison and the RSA team are continuing to move forward on their progress towards independence. RSA staff have created a great deal of documentation about the transition process, which has also been shared with the RSA Board. They have been communicating about the proposed changes to the fee structure, and there was discussion at the most recent RSA Users Group meeting. RAILS has also been creating documentation to aid in the transition, including a breakdown of the differences between services provided by RAILS and those provided by RSA and a letter detailing the history of the ask by RAILS that RSA move towards independence.

RAILS Member Update on February 14

We hosted a RAILS Member Update on February 14 focused on topics of local library support for migrants and asylum seekers, a demonstration of the SLATE School Library Data Commons, general updates from RAILS, an introduction to Kate Niehoff and promotion of Freedom Lifted, and sharing from member libraries.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Joint Board meeting with Illinois Heartland Library System

We have continued with Leslie Bednar and Stacie Bushong at the Illinois Heartland Library System to plan for the Joint System Board Meeting, tentatively scheduled for April 30. Given the need for a venue change, we are discussing potential options in the Bloomington area as well as the possibility to postpone the meeting to the fall in order to accommodate the needs of both organizations for the meeting. We will communicate with you as soon as possible about any potential changes.

Meetings with the Illinois State Library

I continue to meet regularly with the Greg McCormick, Director of the Illinois State Library. They are actively in the process of hiring for open positions. We discussed communication strategies between our organizations, the upcoming joint Board meeting between IHLS and RAILS, and a [pilot collaboration](#) between the Secretary of State's Office, the Chicago Bar Foundation, and the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice that will create legally focused community access centers in libraries across the state.

AISLE Certification Task Force Meeting

Janette Derucki and I met on February 15 with representatives from AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and EveryLibrary to discuss their planned initiative to move forward a legislative solution on having a certified librarian in every school. The group discussed possible courses of action for moving the project forward and plan to meet again in mid-March. The Partnership is expected to pull together advocacy talking points that can support the need for certified librarians and school libraries for student success and that discussion will begin at our March 5 meeting.

RAILS Presentations for PrairieCat and SWAN

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek has been approached to present on the topic of non-residents and the unserved at the PrairieCat Resource Sharing Summit in DeKalb on March 7 and RAILS Delivery and Facilities Director Mark Hatch has been asked to present on Delivery at the SWAN Expo on August 16.

Looking Ahead to March

- **March Service of the Month and Board Development topics – Dr. Leanne Furby and Anna Yackle of the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) will provide a demo of iLead, the statewide Trustee training portal funded by the Illinois State Library**



This Month at RAILS – February 2024

THE TOP THREE

In response to board member feedback, each month we provide brief talking points to help you spread the word about specific RAILS programs/services. Here are this month's top three:

Introducing the School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) Dashboard

RAILS is thrilled to announce the launch of the SLATE data dashboard. This online tool displays data and information about school libraries located throughout the state and aims to play an integral role in school library advocacy.

Visit the [SLATE page](#) on the RAILS website to learn more or [start exploring the dashboard](#).



Directors University 2.0

The Directors University 2.0 committee received 51 applications from library directors hoping to take their learning to the next level at this three-day continuation of Directors University that will take place April 9–11. Session topics will include:

- diversity, equity, and inclusion
- building strong relationships
- building board relationships
- discussing difficult issues
- budgeting best practices and allocating funds
- capital improvement plans
- performance improvement plans
- succession planning
- self- and staff-care

And much more! The committee is reviewing applications and participants will be selected and notified by the end of February.

RAILS, CARLI, and IHLS Publish Open Letter Regarding Digital Equity Plan

In January, RAILS, CARLI and IHLS, submitted public comments representing the statewide library perspective to the Illinois Office of Broadband. This open letter outlines several recommendations for further strengthening the draft Digital Equity Plan. This letter is available for anyone to read from the [Broadband for Libraries site](#).

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILS Support of IMLS Proposal from Dominican University

RAILS is providing support for an Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS) Leadership Grant proposal from Dominican University and partners titled *Exploring User-Informed Approaches to Enhancing Library Metadata for the LGBTQ+ Community*. If awarded, this grant will seek to better understand how adult LGBTQ+ library users understand and make use of current library catalogs, and to explore how the cataloging metadata might be enhanced to better reflect the language, needs and uses within that community of library users. RAILS would assist Dominican University in identifying public libraries in our service area who could help recruit current and potential adult users of their library who identify as LGBTQ+. These participants will take part in both a user study of the library catalog as well as focus groups involving both users and library staff. We will learn the outcome of this grant proposal later in the year.

Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project Winner Announced

Last month the most recent winner of the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project (STBF) was announced. Angelique Burrell, of Naperville, won for her book *A Mark in the Road*. As the winner, Angelique will get a \$2,000 cash prize from BiblioLabs, an opportunity to compete with other Indie Author Project contest winners (around the country and Canada) for the Indie Author of the Year award, and more!

soon to
be famous
^

Illinois Author
Project

Nicole Zimmermann, RAILS Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, is one of the remaining original team members of STBF, working on project details like rules, eligibility, prizes, submissions, marketing, and more over the years. Team members currently come from eight different libraries. In December, RAILS Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist Ola Gronski joined the STBF team to beef up their social media presence.

A couple of recent Facebook posts from Ola include the announcement of STBF finalists, the opening of the Manuscript contest, sharing information about the 2023 STBF Winner, call to action for Manuscript submissions, and notice of past STBF winning authors' program at the Galena LitFest.

January 2024 Overview:

Reach: 21,976 (+2.3K%)

Engagement: 902 (+1.8K%)

Link Clicks: 612 (+4K%)

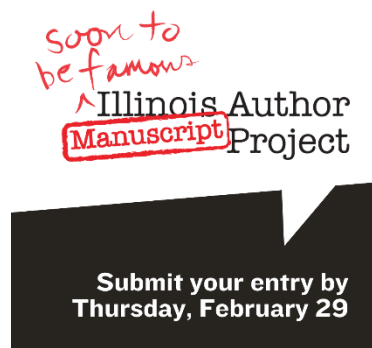
Visits: 497 (+407.1%)

New Likes: 17 (+1.6K%)

Content Performance Highlights:



Impressions: 44,179
Reach: 27,682
Engagement: 2,615
Note: paid boost on 2/6/2024



Impressions: 1,996
Reach: 1,933
Engagement: 85

The Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project (STBF) is beginning its tenth year. Since that time the Project has grown, and now includes the original contest for self-published authors, the STBF Manuscript Project, and the De la Página a la Fama (for Spanish language books). The project team won a John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award in 2015.

RAILS Receives 53 My Library Is... Grant Applications

RAILS is excited to announce that 53 libraries submitted applications for the 2024 My Library Is...Grant program. The deadline to apply for these grants was Wednesday, February 7. Grants will now be scored by a team of volunteer reviewers; official announcements on recipients will take place in April. For a full breakdown of the type and geography of applicant libraries, please see the graphic created by RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki at the end of this report.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our January social media engagement efforts.

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

RAILS members can find information, trial access and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the [RAILS Deals & Discounts page](#).

New! RAILS Discount for the Infobase Homeschool and Independent Learning Package

RAILS members are eligible for advantageous pricing for the Infobase Homeschool and Independent Learning Package. Resources may be purchased individually or in the package for additional savings and include:

- **Issues and Controversies:** a resource for objective analysis of hot topics in society, politics, law, culture and other crucial areas with pro-con articles, debate videos, NPR audio files and more
- **The Mailbox Plus:** a digital resource packed with fun and engaging ideas, activities and worksheets that help inspire imaginations while teaching essential skills
- **World Almanac for Kids:** provides reference resources for homework, reports and projects

- **Access Video On Demand:** offers older students and their parents a collection of high quality videos and documentaries to aid in their studies and research.
- **Just for Kids Streaming:** a kid-safe, ad-free, media platform with educational videos plus songs, games and other interactives.

For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, [members can visit the Deals & Discounts page.](#)

New! RAILS Discount for *SizeUp: Small Business Advisor*

RAILS members are eligible for advantageous pricing for *Small Business Advisor* provides information on numerous topics related to planning, starting, managing, and growing a business. It is designed to easily enable users to explore business topics of their interest. The product provides a roadmap of tasks and processes an entrepreneur can take to be successful. The content is a mix of text, graphics, videos, and interactive research tools which are data-driven, hyper-local to the library's city/county, and industry specific. This software won 1st place from the US Department of Commerce for software that helps businesses succeed and create jobs. For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, [members can visit the Deals & Discounts page.](#)

Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos

In January, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel coordinated two vendor demonstrations for an early literacy products bundle and online tutoring resources for homework, job seekers, veterans, and college applicants. The early literacy webinar drew interest from 16 registrants and the online tutoring webinar attracted 21 registrants.

ConsortiaManager & Data Management

RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at CARLI, met on December 6 to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing.

On February 5, Leila Heath attended the ICOLC ConsortiaManager Working Group Meeting to discuss issues and implementations related to the platform. Over 30 librarians attended, from consortia in the US as well as other countries, to share ideas and suggestions. ConsortiaManager is scheduled to participate in a Vendor Q&A session at the North American ICOLC Meeting in April.

On February 5, Janette Durecki, Grant Halter, Leila Heath, and Jody Rubel met with Jenny Taylor and Nicole Ream-Sotomayor from CARLI to discuss data related to academic libraries. The group discussed data standards, best practices and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)/Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) reports related to academic libraries.

Anna Behm, Wayne Dixon, Karen Goyer, Leila Heath, and Jody Rubel (project leader) continue work on the new eRead Illinois dashboard that streamlines the join and renewal processes. In February, selected libraries will test the form and notifications processes to ensure the dashboard works as expected. The team met with Janette Durecki and Grant Halter to ensure data accuracy related to the renewal process.

Career Online High School Update

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

In January, Jessica Barnes, Leila Heath and Joe Filapek met with Smart Horizons, the parent company of Career Online High School, to go over changes and updates to the program.

On February 1, Jessica Barnes, Leila Heath and Jody Rubel met with Gale to learn more about Excel, Gale's high school completion program for public library users.

COHS Stats as of January 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
418	189	105	60%/53%

Continue to seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

RAILS Receives Additional Delivery Vehicles

During the January board meeting we reported that RAILS had received three new transit vans to replace several aging vehicles in our fleet. Since that meeting, we are pleased to report we have received an additional four transit vans that will replace vehicles in our Coal Valley, East Peoria, Rockford and Bolingbrook facilities. This represents seven out of the eight new transit vans that had been ordered. We are still expecting a total of five box trucks for our Bolingbrook delivery operation, which we are hopeful to receive in April or May.

Work collaboratively to identify and support shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing

Find More Illinois Update

Our investigation into what it might look like to automate libraries and connect them to Find More Illinois has been useful and instructive in helping us clarify the best strategic directions for Find More Illinois as a whole, alongside RAILS's longstanding goal to support library automation in general. We've decided not to move forward at this time with a large-scale project to create a RAILS-managed consortium of newly automated libraries. We will continue to focus on the ongoing sustainability and growth of the core Find More Illinois service, and much of the work we initiated will live on and move forward in a smaller scale as the program progresses. The Verso ILS is available through Deals and Discounts to any library looking to automate, change, or upgrade their existing ILS. Cheney's Grove Township Library is a recent addition to Find More Illinois that opted to automate using Verso.



eRead Illinois Update

RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm met with Jody Rubel, Karen Goyer, and Wayne Dixon to explore the functionality and discuss the eRead Illinois membership dashboard that Wayne is developing. Member testing of the dashboard will begin in February.

The Resource Sharing team began gathering data and preparing eRead Illinois renewals for the complete consortium members.

The PrairieCat consortium elected to renew their membership in eRead Illinois for a three-year term. We are thrilled to have all PrairieCat libraries on board.

Anna Behm and Leila Heath met with the team at Baker & Taylor to discuss ordering efficiencies for the eRead Illinois collection. They came up with a plan to streamline the process for ordering popular materials moving forward.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
January 2024	22,330	17,695	40,025
FY 2024 To Date	136,683	113,507	250,190

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
January 2024	2,088
FY 2024	11,545

Explore More Illinois Update

In January 2024, 2,431 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in January were DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (84), Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (28), Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie (28), Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art in Oak Brook (11), and Discovery Center Museum in Rockford (10). The most popular Chicago attractions in January 2024 were the Museum of Science and Industry (846), Field Museum (517) Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (378), Art Institute of Chicago (270), and Chicago Children’s Museum (128).



Jessica Barnes met with several potential attractions in January. She also worked with CARLI on identifying potential community colleges to join Explore More Illinois.

Explore More Illinois 2023 Year End Stats

In total, 20,193 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois in 2023. 3,287 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois by RAILS and IHLS member library patrons, making it the most successful year ever for the program. In 2022, 832 reservations were made, so 2023 saw a 295% increase in reservations. Chicago Public Library patrons made 16,906 reservations in 2023.

The following attractions were most popular with RAILS and IHLS member library patrons:

1. Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago) – 576 reservations
2. Chicago Children’s Museum – 409 reservations
3. Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe) – 357 reservations
4. DuPage Children’s Museum (Naperville) – 341 reservations
5. Chicago Academy of Sciences Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum – 242 reservations
6. Peoria Riverfront Museum - 187 reservations

7. Anderson Japanese Gardens (Rockford) – 125 reservations
8. Abraham Lincoln President Library and Museum (Springfield) – 123 reservations
9. Discovery Center Museum (Rockford) - 120
10. Illinois Holocaust Museum (Skokie) – 62 reservations

The following attractions were the most popular with all Illinois library patrons:

1. Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago) – 3379 reservations
2. Brookfield Zoo – 2789 reservations (offer available only to CPL patrons)
3. Art Institute of Chicago – 2703 reservations (offer available only to CPL patrons)
4. Chicago Academy of Sciences Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum – 2347 reservations
5. Field Museum (Chicago) – 2206 reservations (offer available only to CPL patrons)
6. Chicago Children’s Museum - 1606 reservations
7. Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe) – 1330 reservations
8. Chicago History Museum – 599 reservations
9. Discovery Center Museum (Rockford) – 464 reservations
10. Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago) – 357 reservations

The following RAILS libraries made the most Explore More Illinois reservations in 2023:

1. Arlington Heights Memorial Library – 184 reservations
2. Fox River Grove Public Library District – 119 reservations
3. Oak Park Public Library – 91 reservations
4. Wilmette Public Library District – 72 reservations
5. Wheaton Public Library – 71 reservations
6. Highland Park Public Library – 65 reservations
7. Barrington Area Public Library District – 64 reservations
8. Mount Prospect Public Library – 64 reservations
9. Elmhurst Public Library – 61 reservations
10. Indian Trails Public Library District – 61 reservations

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of January 31, 2024

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
337	90	1	4	432

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of January 31, 2024

Attractions	48
Total Attractions in 2024	49

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in January 2024

Organization	January 2024
RAILS/IHLS	252
CPL	2,179
Total	2,431

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

RAILS Continuing Education (CE) Grants

RAILS received five proposals by the February 2 deadline. The CE Team is reviewing proposals and awards will be announced by the end of February.

Joe Filapek and Kate Niehoff met with representatives from California Libraries Learn (CALL) to share information and lessons learned from RAILS' CE Grant process as CALL is exploring the idea of offering CE grants to its member libraries.

RAILS Employees Participate in Presentations and Meetings

On January 18, Anna Behm, Leila Heath and Jody Rubel attended the Electronic Subscription Managers (ELSUM) Network Group meeting. This group discusses topics related to e-resources, including usage, promotion opportunities and purchasing. Leila spoke briefly about RAILS deals. Jody highlighted upcoming webinars on a summer reading tool and homeschool and independent learning resources.

On January 26, Anna Behm gave a presentation at the RAILS Board Meeting. She discussed the status of e-content services at RAILS, including updates to the eRead Illinois and inkie.org programs.

Jessica Barnes worked the virtual RAILS booth at IHLS Member Day on February 8, where seven people stopped by to say hello and thank us for our services.

Recent RAILS Webinars

- “Safety and Security Debrief Strategies for Supporting Library Staff”
In this webinar on January 31, 117 RAILS members explored how trauma exposure impacts us and how to identify the signs in library staff. In addition to understanding the elements of an effective and safe incident debrief, the presenter, a library leader with a degree in criminology, discussed the importance and strategies for communication after a significant incident occurs.
- “Making Technology Accessible: Creating an Assistive Tools Kit”
In this webinar on February 13, staff from Arlington Heights Memorial Library showcased their Assistive Tools Kit, a collection of seven small devices that can be used by people of all ages to help with daily tasks such as writing, carrying bags, and opening small lids or bottle caps. AHML's patrons can borrow an assembled kit to learn which tools are most useful and create their own custom kit

using the library's 3D printers. RAILS members learned how to develop and adapt this type of service for their libraries and got tips for identifying assistive design sources, managing production to meet demand and scaling the service to their needs.

Upcoming RAILS Webinars

- “Employee Onboarding: Don't Lose Them at Hello”
RAILS Burr Ridge
Thursday, March 14

This in-person workshop presented by HR Source will discuss the importance of developing employee onboarding programs, what should be included in them, and effective techniques to engage new employees before they even get in the door.

- “Problem Solving and Facilitation for Library Leaders”
Webinar
Thursday, March 21

Details for this event will be published in L2 soon.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

February 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.

February meeting topics included:

- Updates on the SLATE project and the upcoming release of the data dashboard
- Conference updates for ILA and AISLE
- A legislative update from ILA
- A proposal to co-host a booth at the 2024 Illinois Association of School Boards conference in November
- Updates related to Public Act 103-0100
- A discussion of a newly-formed AISLE task force to get certified school librarians in every school

And much more!

RAILS to Participate in 2024 GLAM Event

On Friday, February 23, RAILS will be hosting a virtual booth at the 2024 GLAM Virtual Career Jam for Library Students and Employers. Dan Bostrom and Nicole Zimmermann will be managing the virtual booth. This event is co-hosted by 15 of the most prestigious library programs in the United States. Students and job seekers can participate in 10-minute one-on-one chats, as well as 30-minute group sessions.

JANUARY 2024: analytics

● Facebook

● Instagram

● Twitter

● LinkedIn

followers



December 2023

January 2024

2,393

2,418

1,342

1,355

1,415

1,423

1,257

1,329

reach



December 2023

January 2024

6,164

7,171

1,148

1,166

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

impressions



December 2023

January 2024

N/A

N/A

5,133

6,133

1,973

2,500

5,388

2,642

engagement



December 2023

January 2024

1,766

1,306

355

320

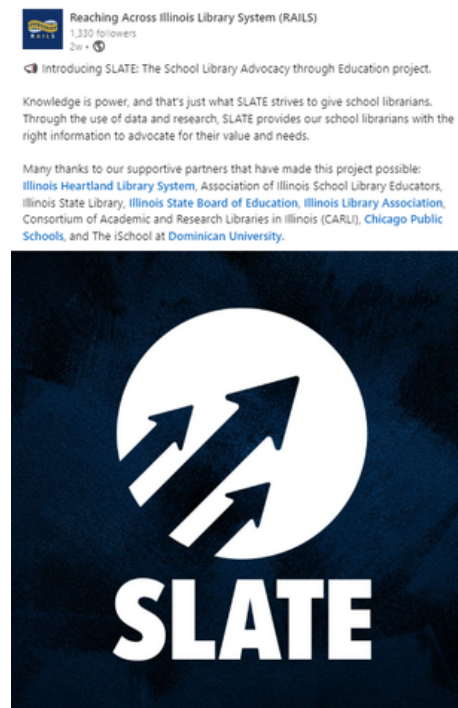
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219

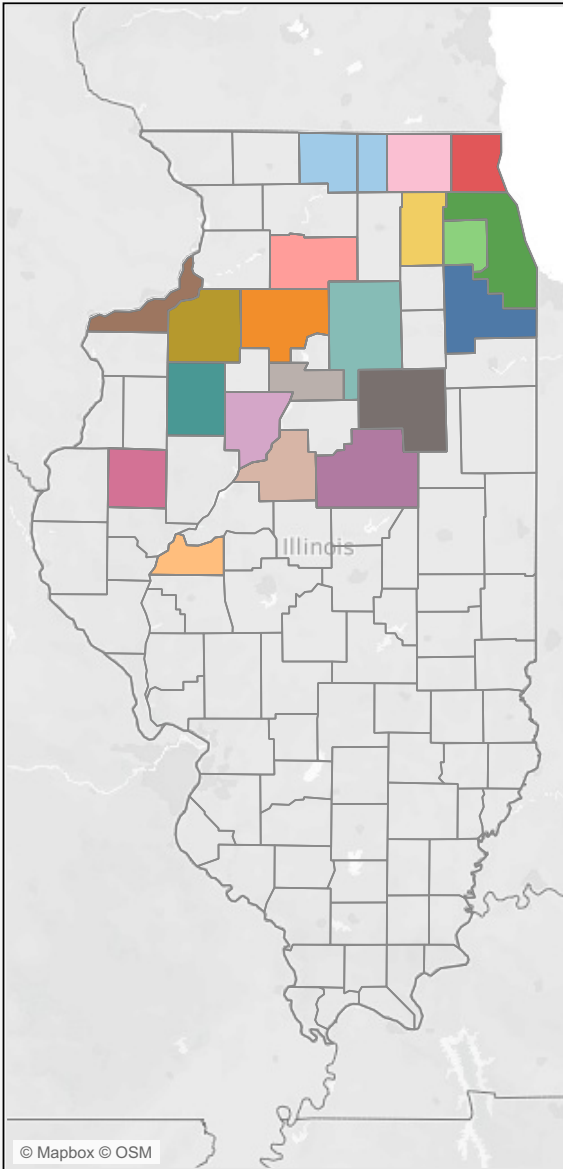
71

JANUARY 2024: top posts





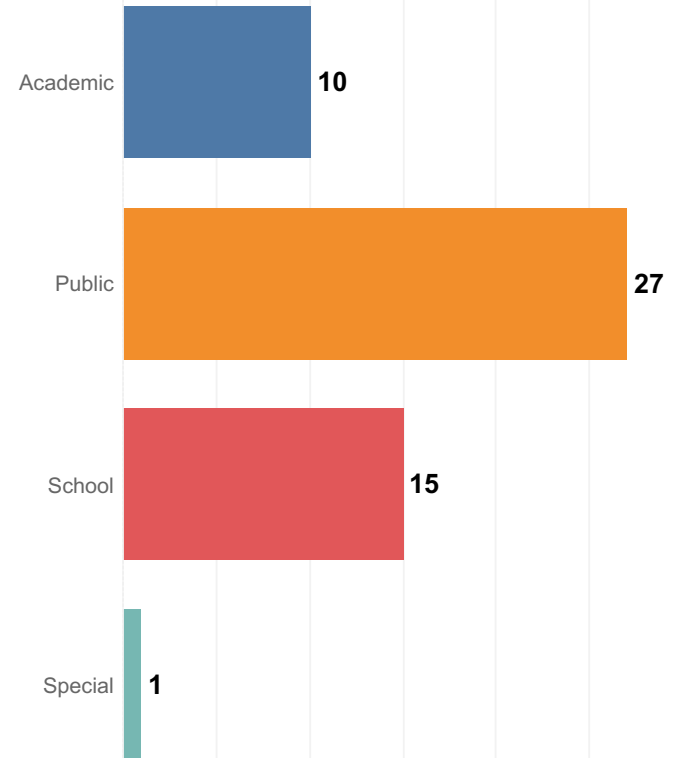
My Library Is... 2024 Grant Applications



Applications by County

Boone	1
Bureau	1
Cass	1
Cook	15
DuPage	4
Henry	4
Kane	1
Knox	1
La Salle	2
Lake	8
Lee	1
Livingston	1
Marshall	1
McDonough	2
McHenry	2
McLean	2
Peoria	1
Rock Island	1
Tazewell	2
Will	1
Winnebago	1

Applications by Library Type



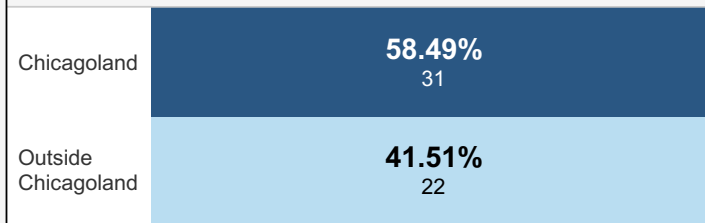
Counties Represented

21

Application Total

53

Agency Location - Proximity to Chicago



Consortia Reports

February 26, 2024

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI/I-Share)

[CARLI Counts: Analytics and Advocacy for Service Development program](#)

CARLI is planning cohort five of the CARLI Counts: Analytics and Advocacy for Service Development program.

[Illinois Student Survey](#)

4,635 students attending 36 Illinois non-for-profit institutions have participated so far in the "[Illinois Course Materials Survey: Student Perspective!](#)" to help CARLI members and CARLI learn more about students' needs regarding affordable course materials and Open Educational Resources.

[OER Training](#)

CARLI is offering a 3-week virtual course (including both synchronous and asynchronous sessions) on Understanding and Promoting Open Educational Resources in February 2024.

[New I-Share Libraries](#)

The New I-Share Libraries project is continuing for the five institutions that will go live locally in June 2024, and be added to I-Share resource sharing in July 2024.

New I-Share libraries in this cohort are Chicago Theological Seminary, City Colleges of Chicago, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, and Prairie State College.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

[New and Potential Members](#)

Onboarding for Waukegan and Mt. Prospect has begun. These members will go live in October 2024.

[Find More Illinois Investigation](#)

Governing Board voted to move forward with consortial membership in Find More Illinois. Debra Wischmeyer is working with RAILS FMI staff Barb and Eric on our project plan and onboarding. We are looking forward to most CCS libraries going live this summer.

Polaris 7.5

The training database was updated to Polaris 7.5 on November 17. CCS staff completed QA testing assignments in November and December.

Polaris 7.5 includes many new features and workflows, including:

- Damaged Item workflows
- Weeding workflow
- Waiver workflow for approving fine waivers

CCS staff are currently evaluating new features and working with relevant advisory and technical groups to determine if and how we are moving forward with the new features and permissions.

Results: Leap Month for Cataloging and Serials Staff

The activities that CCS staff facilitated during Leap Month allowed the member libraries' staff to provide feedback and constructive criticism on the cataloging and serials functions of Leap. While some of the opinions varied, many of the suggestions for improvements and criticism point to the importance of efficiency. This research demonstrates that cataloging staff feel that the Staff Client is more efficient for everyday tasks than Leap. This is not just because it takes time to get used to Leap. Staff clearly feel that more clicks are needed to do everything in Leap than the Staff Client. There are still functions necessary for their work that are missing from Leap, but available in the Staff Client. It will be difficult to convince staff at the existing CCS member libraries to switch to Leap without it having achieved parity with the Staff Client. Development suggestions are being forwarded to Innovative. Contact Rachel Fischer for more information.

Open Positions at CCS

<https://www.ccslib.org/employment>

CCS has posted two positions:

- User Experience Specialist: This is the vacancy created by Kathleen's departure from CCS
- Member Services Associate: This is a new position that will focus on training and support. Existing Member Services Librarians will develop the curriculum and strategy for training, this position is more an entry-level role (2 years of experience preferred, not required).

CCS to Participate in GLAM Career Jam

From GLAM Organizers: GLAM presents a unique opportunity for students and alumni hailing from 15 of the most prestigious library programs in the United States to engage with recruiters from leading employers and professional organizations. If you're seeking exceptional talent to fill internships, practica, or full-time positions, or if you wish to enhance your organization's visibility, this event offers you the chance to connect with students and alumni representing schools recognized as the best in Library and Information Studies Programs by US News & World Report. All of this, conveniently in just one day.

CCS will participate in a few ways:

- February 5, Debra will speak on the Alternative Careers for Librarians panel
- February 23 CCS will offer

- 1:1 coaching/networking appointments for students
- 30-minute group sessions
 - CCS staff will host sessions and
 - CCS member library staff are invited to participate in panels

Administrative Changes

CCS is moving from twice monthly to biweekly payroll effective January 1, 2024.

CCS is moving towards ACH payments. We are working to fine tune to the approval process while maintaining our internal controls.

New Directors

CCS held 6 new director orientations in November and December! It's been a busy quarter for retirements, promotions, and new libraries.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

New Member Services Librarian

Pinnacle has welcomed Brittany Smith as our new Member Services Librarian! Brittany has previously worked as the Assistant Director and Manager of Adult Services at the Westmont Public Library and Circulation Coordinator at La Grange Park Public Library. The Member Services Librarian position focuses on training for library staff, creating documentation, and providing general ILS support.

Annual Strategic Plan Meeting

In January, we will be hosting our annual strategic planning meeting. This meeting brings together the Governing Board, Assistant Directors from each library, committee chairs, and Pinnacle staff to discuss projects and action items related to our strategic plan.

Polaris 7.5 Upgrade

On January 7, we upgraded to the newest version of Polaris. This upgrade includes new functionality to declare items damaged and some added structure to the weeding process.

Chat Widget Re-Enabled

We previously reported that our chat widget was disabled for all libraries due to the increase in bomb threats. We've since re-enabled the widget for all libraries.

PrairieCat

Vega Discover

PrairieCat officially went live on our new catalog discovery layer, Vega Discover, on November 30th. All libraries are now running on Vega Discover. PrairieCat continues to work with Innovative on their Vega Promote product, which will allow libraries to create custom marketing campaigns. Consortia access to this product is about to be released, and we look forward to working further with the design team to provide input on this aspect of Vega.

New Libraries

On Dec. 8th, Putnam Primary School went live on PrairieCat's system. They join the existing High school and Junior High as members of the PrairieCat database.

Winnebago Public Library is slated to go live on our system on January 24. Staff are working on finalizing things in preparation for this event. Winnebago was formerly a stand-alone library.

Resource Sharing Summit

This year's Resource Sharing Summit will be held on March 7th at the DeKalb Public Library. The topic of discussion will be "serving the unserved".

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC) recently held their first meeting of FY24, we welcomed two new librarians to the group, Christina Kessler, Director of Dixon Public Library and Nancy Myers, Librarian at Rock Falls Middle school. RRLC is updating their consortium bylaws which have not been reviewed or updated in eight years. We are also looking at the contract since we recently had some issues with members not fulfilling their obligations.

Technology Grant

Members also approved awarding up to \$3000 to member libraries that applied for a technology grant. The grant required purchased technology be used in the library by the library staff to access TLC or for instruction on how to access the OPAC, databases or eBooks. Funds were provided from the RAILS Consortium support grant given to RRLC.

MyLibro App

We rolled out our newest app to our schools (5-12 grade) and public libraries. MyLibro, all-in-one mobile solution for our libraries. The app is branded RRLC and is available in the Apple and Android app stores. The application stores patron's library card along with allowing patrons to store other family member's cards, search the OPAC, virtual assistant and Alexa skill for voice interaction, allows libraries to push notifications (such as closures). The app was purchased using RRLC Consortium grant funds.

Well, that seems to be all RRLC has to say this quarter. Thank you, RAILS, for your continued support.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

RSA Independence Project Update

The RSA Independence Project (RIP) is right on track. We've got final versions of the intergovernmental agreement, Bylaws, Board Make-up, and RSA Membership Regions. We're in the final review and tweaking phase of entirely new fee structures; one for Public libraries, and a difference fee structure for School, Academic, and Special libraries. All of these documents should be finalized by the end of January and will be presented to the RSA membership at the mid-February Users Group meeting. RSA admin staff are also working up a large, multifaceted Director's Communications Package which will cover everything from the difference between RAILS and RSA, to the history of RSA and our fee structure, full services listings, and more. This package is intended to help Directors and School librarians educate their Board or Administrator about RSA and why these changes are being made. Finally, we've learned that we will

be required to elect an all new Board for our 1 July governance change to a Intergovernmental Instrumentality and have started planning for the best legal way to accomplish that prior to July.

Catalog Rework and Record Upgrades

We had to unexpectedly rework our online catalog to add and enable mobile themed pages for patron use. This is due to the unexpected death of the SirsiDynix mobile catalog app. SirsiDynix and their mobile app vendor had a nasty breakup and the end result was the app being turned off by the vendor with no notice. Libraries world-wide are dealing with the fallout and explaining to the issue to patrons who have used the app for years.

The CMC started on working on about 5,000 OCLC Level 8 & M records in need of upgrade. Our Cataloging Supervisor wrote up extensive documentation on Symphony, the old OTRS help desk, and RSA's cataloging standards. She's working with the CMC and answer questions from their staff as they arise. We expect a multi-year effort will be required to finish up all the record upgrades.

Cataloging and Member Services Updates

Cataloging Department staff are working to shrink our 3-day Basic Cataloging course down to a single day, 4-ish hour course. We expect to roll that out in 2nd quarter of 2024. This will help staff from our small and school libraries to attend more easily.

Member Services and Cataloging staff have resumed in person library visits. We do visits for new Directors, cataloging help and consulting, automation system tips and tricks, and general information sharing. The Cataloging visits have been an unexpectedly big hit, with members reaching out to proactively schedule visits.

Index and Operations Manual

All departments have been working to create a consolidated index of all RSA policies, standards, procedures, cheat sheets, and guides. The consolidated index allows staff to quickly find source documents and last updated dates for all RSA member focused documents. This index will be uploaded to the website and used to ensure the various positional handbooks list out all the official documentation. We've also started working with several libraries to create a RSA Operations Manual that will list out a standardized method for running an automated library in our system. The manual isn't intended to be the only way to use RSA's services, but will serve as a starting point for libraries to develop their own local manuals, or for those libraries with only one or two staff to refer to when turnover occurs.

User Clean-Up

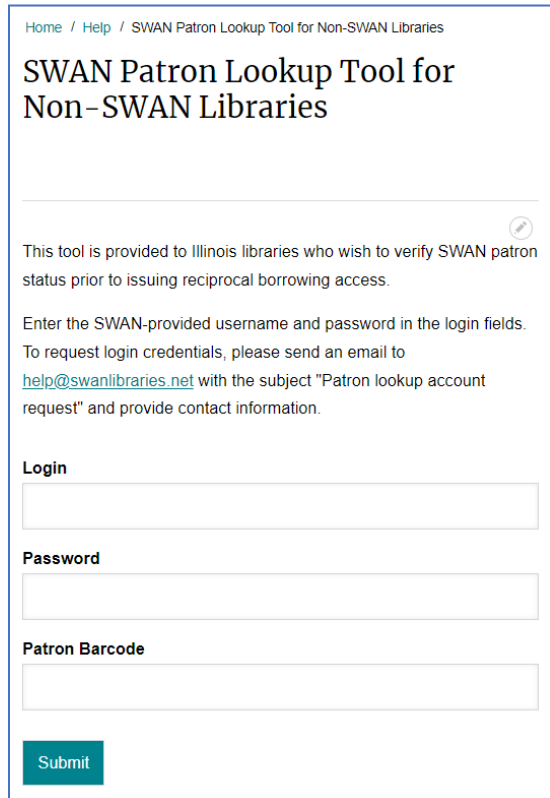
RSA staff have just about finished working with each of our 143 member libraries to reduce the number of expired users in the system. As of mid-December, we're deleted over 50,000 users expired 3 or more years from the system. This project is now moving forward with reducing the numbers of duplicate users, fixing users with bad ID's, issues with incorrectly entered patron information, and other general patron database issues.

Web-Based Reports

The Systems Department is creating new, web-based reports to enable self-service answers to ILLINET and IPLAR data questions. We're also working to create web-based reports with data and graphics Directors can provide to their Boards. This is very time-consuming to develop, but eliminates the hassle

of members looking through over 100 reports on our on-line reporting tool, where they try to find the correct iteration to answer a particular question. These reports will be far more interactive and allow libraries to slice and dice results in real-time to allow serendipitous examination of their data.

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)



The screenshot shows a web page titled "SWAN Patron Lookup Tool for Non-SWAN Libraries". At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Home / Help / SWAN Patron Lookup Tool for Non-SWAN Libraries". Below the title, there is a horizontal line. Underneath, a paragraph states: "This tool is provided to Illinois libraries who wish to verify SWAN patron status prior to issuing reciprocal borrowing access." Below this, another paragraph says: "Enter the SWAN-provided username and password in the login fields. To request login credentials, please send an email to help@swanlibraries.net with the subject 'Patron lookup account request' and provide contact information." There are three input fields: "Login", "Password", and "Patron Barcode". At the bottom left of the form area is a blue "Submit" button.

Reciprocal borrower online verification

Last month SWAN provided the six Pinnacle libraries access to our patron lookup tool. This tool was created for use with neighboring libraries that have SWAN library cardholders visiting as reciprocal borrowers. The tool has been available to non-SWAN libraries for several years now and was initially created to assist Chicago Public Library staff during the reciprocal borrower process.

To access the SWAN Reciprocal Borrower Lookup Tool, you must request login credentials from SWAN. Send email to help@swanlibraries.net with the subject "Patron lookup account request." Provide the following information:

- Library Name
- Link to Library in L2
- Contact Person Name
- Phone Number for Verification
- Email Address for Follow-up

Using L2, we will assign a Username for access which matches your Library Control Number and create a randomized password. This account information will be shared in a follow-up phone call.

Once the account is created, the tool can be accessed at: <https://support.swanlibraries.net/help/reciprocal-borrower-patron-lookup>

"SWAN Libraries +" Mobile App Now Aspen Library Discovery App

SWAN launched the Aspen Library Discovery App, known as LiDA, on December 12, 2023. LiDA gives patrons consistent experience with search and account management across our public platform. SWAN will be active in the development of new features as we have been with Aspen Discovery. The SWAN LiDA replaces the mobile app that has been in use since 2018.

Growing Aspen Discovery Community in Illinois

Gail Borden Public Library and the SHARE consortium of 338 libraries are in the process of moving to the Aspen Discovery platform. Helen Plum Public Library and SWAN's 100 libraries bring the total to 440 libraries in Illinois using the library created platform.

The first Aspen Discovery conference "[AspenCon](#)" will be held this year in Golden, Colorado, and SWAN User Experience Manager Tara Wood has been invited to present. Libraries interested in learning about

firsthand Aspen Discovery, LiDA, and hosting support with ByWater Solutions should contact us at help@swanlibraries.net

SWAN Events & Consulting for 2024

We have posted our full calendar of events for 2024 in L2. These can be found with the keyword search “swan2024” in L2. These 95 events are important membership engagement opportunities which provide feedback on SWAN’s resource sharing platform. For 2024, SWAN staff are introducing a new way for libraries to book consulting time through a new feature called Zoom Scheduler. This feature will poll multiple Outlook calendars and present date/times to libraries seeking to have individual consulting on topics such as circulation configuration, vendor integrations, and collection management, and book a Zoom meeting with SWAN staff directly based on availability.