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**February 3, 2024**

**TO: RAILS Resource Sharing Committee**  
**FROM: Joe Filapek, RAILS Associate Executive Director**  
**SUBJECT: RAILS Resource Sharing Plan**

Included in your packet is a copy of the [RAILS Resource Sharing Plan](#). A resource sharing plan is a requirement for regional library systems as outlined by the administrative rules in Section 3030.315 – Standards for Core Services. At minimum, the RAILS Resource Sharing Plan must address four issues:

- How a library shall provide reciprocal access, including any limitations
- How a library may participate in statewide reciprocal borrowing
- A mechanism for resolving disputes over resource sharing (reciprocal borrowing/ILL issues, damage/loss of materials, etc.)
- The requirement that the borrowing library is responsible for lost and damaged materials if the patron does not pay. The plan may allow for alternative means if the lending library agrees

The RAILS Resource Sharing Plan was last approved by the RAILS board in October 2018. With over five years since this plan was last reviewed, we would like the Resource Sharing Committee to assess our current plan for any potential modifications. As soon as our May 6 meeting, we may look for the Resource Sharing Committee to approve a revised Resource Sharing Plan which would subsequently move to the RAILS Policy Committee for further review.

Apart from updating outdated links and other minor edits to wording in the existing plan, there are several other areas/topics that the committee could potentially consider including:

- Language around resource sharing policies being shared in the L2 member directory
- Inclusion of language addressing the Cards for Kids Act
- Defining rights of non-resident cardholders
- Affirming the different ways that member libraries may participate in resource sharing – Find More Illinois, LLSAP membership, etc.

These items are in addition to any other suggestions from Resource Sharing Committee members. We look forward to a good discussion at our February 12 committee meeting.

## RAILS Resource Sharing Plan

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) serves over 1,200 libraries across 27,000 square miles in northern and western Illinois. Its primary mission is to support, facilitate and promote resource sharing among RAILS member libraries, libraries across the state of Illinois, and beyond. RAILS is a multitype regional library system that fosters collaboration and resource sharing among libraries to empower them to better serve their clientele or library users.

Resource sharing is vitally important in the current Illinois fiscal environment. Every RAILS member faces the challenge of making the most of limited resources. Since all libraries share the common goal of offering the highest quality service to library patrons possible, it is to the advantage of all that every RAILS member share resources with other RAILS members to the widest extent possible.

“Resource Sharing” means making the collections of one library available to the patrons of another library efficiently and effectively. Resource sharing encompasses the technical capabilities, staff expertise and policies necessary to achieve that objective. Resource sharing incorporates activities related to automated discovery tools (including bibliographic library databases), collection management, bibliographic description, delivery, interlibrary loan, reciprocal access and reciprocal borrowing. Resource sharing is a core system service ([ILAC 3030.110](#)).” Resource sharing is not always an equal exchange, but overall should be mutually beneficial for all participants. The Illinois Library System Act, [75 ILCS 10/1](#), encourages cooperation among all types of libraries in promoting the sharing of library resources. Illinois Administrative Code, [23 ILAC 3030.200](#), requires participation in several kinds of resource sharing activities as a condition of full membership in a library system. Reciprocal borrowing, reciprocal access and interlibrary loan are all components of resource sharing. It is expected that each RAILS member library will participate in resource sharing as completely as possible within any organizational or legal limitations that may be necessary.

This plan is a requirement of Illinois State Library Administrative Code Rules per [ILAC 3030.215](#). The goal of this plan is to explain that all library patrons within the RAILS area have access to the library resources they need. This is a general plan and is not meant to cover every situation that may arise. When specific issues develop between libraries that are not covered by this plan, members are encouraged to work with each other to come up with agreeable solutions, keeping in mind the goal for each RAILS member to participate in resource sharing as completely as possible.

Libraries that belong to a shared catalog group may also have separate agreements as long as they are aligned with the RAILS Resource Sharing Plan.

The goal of RAILS is to help our members to expand resource sharing in Illinois and beyond. The RAILS website displays a map of the state of resource sharing in RAILS which can be found here: <https://www.railslibraries.info/services/catalogs-map>. This map indicates unserved areas within RAILS. Whenever possible, RAILS supports expanding service to these areas for more access to information for Illinois residents.

Any changes to this plan are subject to approval by the RAILS Board of Directors and the Illinois State Library (Office of the Secretary of State).

## II. GENERAL RESOURCE SHARING GUIDELINES

### A. Responsibilities of All RAILS Member Libraries

1. Each member library has the responsibility of locally meeting as many of its patrons' needs as possible. Resource sharing is intended as a way to help supplement the local library's collection and should not be used as a substitution for financial support and collection management on the local level.
2. Each RAILS member library shall participate in resource sharing as completely as possible and shall only impose restrictions as required by organizational or legal limitations.
3. To facilitate resource sharing among RAILS libraries, all RAILS member libraries shall include their resource sharing policies as a part of their library's record on the [Library Learning \(L2\) website](#) and other applicable electronic platforms such as OCLC and shall keep those policies up-to-date.

### B. Responsibilities of RAILS

1. The RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing shall coordinate, monitor and guide all system resource sharing activities and answer member questions regarding resource sharing.
2. RAILS shall promote the value of resource sharing to all member libraries and shall encourage members to be as generous as possible in their resource sharing policies and procedures.
3. RAILS shall encourage and support resource sharing through activities such as delivery and training for system members in areas directly related to resource sharing.
4. RAILS shall distribute current state and system resource sharing policies to members via the RAILS website and other means as appropriate.
5. RAILS shall maintain the L2 website and shall provide assistance and instruction to members in posting their resource sharing policies to the L2 website.

## III. RECIPROCAL ACCESS

Reciprocal Access: The resources of all full member libraries of a library system are made available to all library patrons in the system area. Reciprocal access benefits should be imposed equally among all reciprocal access patrons and can include interlibrary loans, photocopy service, reference service, use of library materials on site, and other services. The library governing authority may approve reasonable restrictions, applied equally among all reciprocal access patrons, for services such as computer access, library programs and meeting room use in accordance with the library system's resource sharing plan.

A. Responsibilities of All RAILS Libraries

Each RAILS member library shall: Participate in the reciprocal access program by making its library materials available to patrons of other member libraries in the least restrictive way possible, except:

1. Contractual arrangements for licensed or proprietary databases/e-resources may limit the use of such databases/e-resources to registered cardholders.
2. Non-public libraries may place reasonable restrictions on physical access to their facilities and materials by patrons of other libraries.

B. Responsibilities of RAILS

The RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing shall coordinate, monitor and guide the reciprocal access program and answer member questions about the program.

#### IV. STATEWIDE RECIPROCAL BORROWING

**Reciprocal Borrowing:** The right of a person who holds a valid, in-good-standing library registration card from a full member public library to borrow materials on site from other library system full member public libraries under the same conditions that the library provides those materials to its patrons, subject to reasonable restrictions approved by the library's governing board in accordance with requirements of the library system's resource sharing plan and this Part.

- A. RAILS Resource Sharing Department will educate and promote statewide reciprocal borrowing to all members. RAILS, in partnership with Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) and the Chicago Public Library System, encourages and promotes statewide reciprocal borrowing among all Illinois public libraries that are system members.
- B. No library may charge a fee to any statewide reciprocal borrower that is not charged to the library's patrons or system-wide reciprocal borrower unless the fee was in effect on July 1, 2014.

#### V. SYSTEM-WIDE RECIPROCAL BORROWING

A. Responsibilities of All RAILS Public Libraries

1. All RAILS public libraries shall provide reciprocal borrowing to any person in good standing who has a valid library account with a RAILS public library in Illinois. All reciprocal borrowing patrons will be treated the same.
2. Each RAILS public library member is encouraged to share as widely as possible. Given that there may be situations where libraries need to impose reasonable restrictions in order to meet the demands of local taxpayers and residents, the lending library may restrict reciprocal borrowing but not set to zero. Restrictions shall only be imposed as absolutely necessary and all restrictions must apply equally to all reciprocal borrowers.
  - a. When imposing loan restrictions on reciprocal borrowing, libraries shall post this information as a part of their resource sharing policies on the [L2 website](#).

- b. As required by Illinois Administrative Code ([23 ILAC 3030.215](#)), the library of a patron who borrows materials from another library through reciprocal borrowing is responsible for lost and damaged materials if the patron does not pay. However, alternate means of resolving the loss or damage may be used if both the lending and borrowing libraries agree.
  - c. Libraries are required to assist with retrieval of delinquent materials borrowed by verifying patron information for one of its registered borrowers upon request.
  - d. Libraries are required to assist with collecting payment for bills incurred by one of its registered borrowers for lost/damaged items as legal limitations and internal library regulations allow.
  - e. Libraries are required to honor any request by a lending library to mark a patron's account as delinquent or to place a stop/block on a patron's account at the patron's home library for unpaid bills related to lost or damaged items obtained via reciprocal borrowing. If the patron's home library refuses to honor the request, then that home library shall be responsible for paying the bills incurred by the patron for lost or damaged items provided that the lending library sends the bills to the home library within one year of the infraction. The library requesting the block shall provide notification when the block is no longer needed and may be removed.
  - f. Contact the home library when in doubt about a patron's delinquency status.
3. All RAILS public libraries shall include their library's reciprocal borrowing policies as a part of their library's record on the L2 website and shall keep those policies up-to-date.
4. Responsibilities of RAILS Academic, School, and Special libraries  
When institutional regulations allow, all RAILS academic, school and special libraries are encouraged to permit reciprocal borrowing of items from their collections to a patron in good standing with a valid Illinois public library card. As necessary, the library will check the status of the patron account with the home library before circulating materials.
- a. All RAILS academic, school and special libraries that choose to participate in reciprocal borrowing shall follow relevant reciprocal borrowing policies established by RAILS.
  - b. All RAILS academic, school and special libraries shall include their library's reciprocal borrowing policies as a part of their library's record on the L2 website and shall keep those policies up-to-date.
5. Responsibilities of RAILS
- a. The RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing shall coordinate, monitor and guide the Reciprocal Borrowing Program (RBP) and answer member questions about the program.
  - b. RAILS shall maintain the L2 website and shall provide assistance and instruction to members in posting their reciprocal borrowing policies to the L2 website.
6. Library Cards  
The library card must sufficiently identify the cardholder and the home library. It also must include information that facilitates communication with other RAILS member public libraries for reciprocal borrowing purposes required by the Illinois State Library Administrative Code.

## VI. INTERLIBRARY LOAN

According to the [ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code, Illinois State Library \(2015\)](#), interlibrary loan is the process by which a library requests material from, or supplies material to, another library. The purpose of interlibrary loan is to obtain, upon request of a library user, material not available in the user's local library.

- A. Responsibilities of All RAILS Libraries
  1. All full members of RAILS shall comply with the most current ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code.
  2. All RAILS member libraries shall post their interlibrary loan plan as a part of their library's record on the Library Learning (L2) website. These policies shall include contact information, reimbursement costs for lost materials, formats of materials the library will and will not lend, as well as photocopy policies.
- B. Responsibilities of RAILS
  1. The RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing shall coordinate, monitor and guide the interlibrary loan program and answer member questions about the program or refer the member to someone who can answer the question.
  2. RAILS shall support interlibrary loan through the timely, efficient delivery of materials through the system's delivery service and by providing training for members in areas directly related to interlibrary loan.
  3. RAILS shall maintain the L2 website and shall provide assistance and instruction to members in posting their resource sharing policies to the L2 website.
  4. All RAILS members are required to complete the Illinois State Library ILLINET Reciprocal Borrowing and Interlibrary Loan Traffic Survey as a requirement of the Illinois State Library Annual Certification Process.

## VII. NONRESIDENT CARDS AND NONRESIDENT BORROWING

- A. Responsibilities of RAILS Public Libraries
  1. As required by State administrative code, [23 ILAC 3050.20](#), each public library board of trustees shall annually review its nonresident fee policy and take action to decide whether to issue nonresident library cards during the next 12 month period.
  2. At that time, the board shall also determine and adopt the fee formula and fee.
  3. Within 30 days of board action, the public library shall notify RAILS of the action taken, effective dates, and fee formula.
  4. To report nonresident fee program information to RAILS, each library shall visit the L2 website and edit the library's nonresident card status.
- B. Responsibilities of RAILS
  1. RAILS shall provide an electronic method of collecting nonresident fee program information from its member libraries.
  2. RAILS shall maintain an up-to-date list on its website indicating which libraries participate in the nonresident borrowing program. This list shall also be available in print upon request and available for public inspection at the regional library system headquarters.

## VIII. RAILS RESOURCE SHARING PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

- A. Responsibilities of All RAILS Libraries
1. All RAILS libraries shall post their resource sharing policies as a part of their library's record on L2.
  2. Individual RAILS libraries are responsible for informing other member libraries of any failure to observe their library's resource sharing policies.
  3. RAILS libraries are expected to work out disputes between themselves as a first course of action.
  4. A library may restrict or suspend service to any library that disregards its policies. Such action requires written notification to the suspended library, specifying the terms and duration of the suspension. A copy of all documentation regarding suspensions should be sent to RAILS.
  5. Should violations continue to occur, a library may request assistance from RAILS. The request must be submitted to RAILS in writing and a copy should go to the library allegedly committing the violations.
- B. Responsibilities of RAILS
1. The RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing shall oversee resource sharing operations and assist with plan enforcement as necessary.
  2. RAILS will assist libraries that are unable to solve disputes regarding enforcement of local library resource sharing policies by helping to clarify and interpret the RAILS plan.
  3. Violations of this plan may result in loss of full RAILS member status and related system services until a library is able to once again comply with the legal requirements established for full members of a library system. RAILS will inform the library in question about the violation(s) and steps that must be taken to comply with full member requirements.

## IX. DEFINITIONS

**Full Member:** A library that meets the criteria for full library system membership as specified in Section 3030.200.

**Good Standing:** A valid library account that has not been blocked. Each library is responsible for determining the requirements for good standing and blocking patrons that do not meet those requirements.

**Home Library:** The library that is located within the taxing district of the patron's residence. This library issues an account for the patron that includes the patron's name and address. The patron has also supplied the proper documentation as required by the library.

**ILLINET Library:** A library that is a member of an Illinois regional library system.

**Interlibrary Loan:** Interlibrary loan is the process by which a library requests material from, or supplies material to, another library. Whether initiated by library staff or patron, the purpose

of interlibrary loan is to obtain, upon request of a library patron, material not available in the patron's local library. The terms "requesting library" and "supplying library" are used in preference to "borrowing library" and "lending library" to cover the exchange of copies as well as loans. Circulation of materials between a central library and its branches or within a school district is not considered interlibrary loan. [2015 ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code, Illinois State Library](#).

For example, interlibrary loan is conducted between two different libraries not funded by the same governing agency. Interlibrary loan is not conducted between two libraries within the same school district or library district.

**L2:** The Library Learning website (L2) serves as the official membership directory for RAILS and other library systems in the state of Illinois. Each member library should enter and update its own L2 information, including contact information, staff information and up-to-date resource sharing policies. [www.librarylearning.info](http://www.librarylearning.info)

**Nonresident:** An individual residing in Illinois who does not have their principal residence within a public library service area.

**Nonresident Library Card:** A library card/account purchased from a public library participating in the nonresident program by an individual residing in an area not taxed for public library service.

**Reciprocal Borrowing Program (RBP):** The formal name for the program in which a patron physically travels to a public library outside of his or her taxing district in order to borrow materials owned by a library that is not the patron's home library.

**Reciprocal Access:** The resources of all full member libraries of a library system are made available to all library patrons in the system area. Reciprocal access benefits should be imposed equally among all reciprocal access patrons and can include interlibrary loans, photocopy service, reference service, use of library materials on site, and other services. The library governing authority may approve reasonable restrictions, applied equally among all reciprocal access patrons, for services such as computer access, library programs and meeting room use in accordance with the library system's resource sharing plan.

**Reciprocal Borrowing:** The right of a person who holds a valid, in-good-standing library registration card from a full member public library to borrow materials on site from other library system full member public libraries under the same conditions that the library provides those materials to its patrons, subject to reasonable restrictions approved by the library's governing board in accordance with requirements of the library system's resource sharing plan and this Part. The term "reciprocal borrowing" encompasses "Statewide Reciprocal Borrowing" and "System-wide Reciprocal Borrowing," which are also defined in this Section.

**Registered Borrower:** A library patron who possesses an account with the library.

**Valid Library Account:** A patron account that has not been stopped, blocked, or expired. The information included in a patron account is determined through policy set by library board.