
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.

RAILS Engagement at the AISLE and ILA Annual Conferences

Several RAILS staff presented during the 2023 ILA Annual Conference October 24-26 in Springfield. Sessions included:

- Advocating for Great Illinois School Libraries (Dan Bostrom, Janette Derucki)
- Cultivating Belonging: How We Moved EDI Initiatives from Training to Action (Sam Daly)
- Expanding Library Service Across Illinois with Resource Sharing (Barb Miller, Anne Slaughter)
- Growing with Cataloging Training (Nincy George)
- Surprise! You Are a Cataloger: Free Cataloging Resources and Tips to Help You Catalog Materials (Nincy George)

At the ILA Membership Meeting in Springfield, RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter announced a collaboration between RAILS, IHLS, and CARLI to advocate for and support libraries in the deployment of state and federal funding for broadband expansion and digital equity programs. The newly launched BroadbandForLibraries.com site shares a collaborative open letter submitted as public comment to the Illinois Office of Broadband and includes additional resources to help libraries engage with this work and prepare for the release of the state's Digital Equity Plan in January.

The eRead Illinois 10 Year Anniversary Party, held at the ILA Conference on October 24, was attended by about 300 people celebrating the success of the statewide program. The event was hosted by RAILS and IHLS and open to all conference attendees. Anna Behm gave a brief overview of the statewide program and Leslie Bednar, Monica Harris, and Jim Smith, Baker & Taylor's Executive/Senior VP of Sales gave short speeches. Sponsors of the event included Baker & Taylor, Quipu and The New York Times.

RAILS also had a strong presence during the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) conference October 1-3 in Champaign. Sessions led by RAILS staff included:

- General Informational Session with RAILS (Dan Bostrom)
- 10 Years of eRead Illinois (Anna Behm)
- A New Training Event for School Library Workers (Dan Bostrom)
- Unlock the Power of Data: Using the School Library Dashboard (Janette Derucki)

Safety and Security in Illinois Libraries

Following the September 15 meeting with Illinois Library Directors who had experienced threats at their libraries, RAILS organized a second opportunity for RAILS library directors to discuss library safety and security on October 5. Our thanks to the directors who attended and shared their experiences to help RAILS member library directors prepare for this unprecedented moment. A summary of the meeting, including potential takeaways for directors, was shared using the Directors List on October 6. Our colleagues at the Illinois Library Association also attended the meeting.

As most are probably aware, on October 11 an individual was charged with multiple felonies related to fake bomb threats in the northern suburbs affecting libraries as well as schools and businesses.

The Illinois Library Association announced their “More Than a Building” initiative during the ILA Annual Conference in Springfield, which will provide libraries with additional resources and guidance related to library safety and security. Secretary of State Giannoulias pledged \$10,000 in support of this initiative, which was also announced during the annual conference.

Executive Director Monica Harris attended the Library Journal Directors Summit preconference on Safety and Security on November 8.

My Library Is... Grants Now Open for Application

RAILS is excited to announce the opening of applications for the 2024 My Library Is... Grants. These grants are designed to help libraries tell their story. In 2024, these grants are now open to all types of libraries, including – academic, public, school, and special libraries. Libraries can apply for up to \$5,000. Applications are due Wednesday, February 7, 2024. Learn more at the [My Library Is... Grant page](#).

November ISLAC Meeting

The Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) met on November 1 in Springfield. Anne Slaughter of RAILS again spoke on statewide efforts to support libraries in the deployment of state and federal funding for broadband expansion and digital equity initiatives. These efforts reflect a joint coalition including RAILS, IHLS and CARLI. The November meeting also included a presentation from CARLI on Open Educational Resources (OER). This included preliminary information on the \$3 million appropriation for academic libraries from the Secretary of State’s General Revenue Fund for grants to academic libraries for OER. Additional agenda items included updates on the Secretary of State’s FY24 Budget, Administrative Rules for [Public Act 103-0100](#), and Databases for Libraries in Illinois.

RAILS Member Update, November 15

We welcome staff at all levels from all types of RAILS libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) to join the RAILS Member Update on Wednesday, November 15, from 1 to 2 p.m. on Zoom. Topics will include new EDI member resource information, broadband updates in Illinois, the My Library Is... Grant, Illinois State Library news from Greg McCormick, and more. [See agenda](#) and [register via Zoom](#).

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! RAILS Discount for Era Books Online

RAILS members are eligible for advantageous pricing for **Era Books Online**, which provides children with an extensive range of books, games and activities to improve their English (US) reading, writing and comprehension skills. Libraries can elevate their phonics, literacy and literature collections with curated content by trusted educators, that is supported by early childhood research. Accessible by web Apps for modern browsers and mobile Apps for iOS and Android, Era Books Online makes learning convenient, engaging and fun! For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, members can visit the Era Books Online Package Deals & Discounts page.

Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos

In October, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel organized and hosted two readers' advisory resource webinars for 15 attendees. A recording of the webinar is available on the Deals & Discounts page. The promotion resulted in two new library sign ups that resulted in \$548 total savings.

Jody Rubel continues to receive quote requests and new signups for the movie performance rights licenses and digital newspapers and magazines offers. More than 33% of the currently subscribing libraries have renewed their movie performance rights licenses. The group purchase sign-up and renewal period ends on November 30.

While at the ILA Conference October 24-26 in Springfield, IL both Jody Rubel and Leila Heath met vendors to discuss and strengthen the Deals & Discounts offers to our members, and to explore potential opportunities. Two of our vendor partners were first time exhibitors at the conference.

ConsortiaManager & Data Management

On October 17, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Jody Rubel attended the Consortia Manager user group meeting to learn more about recent enhancements and development roadmap. About 60 consortia now subscribe to ConsortiaManager, both in the US and internationally.

Leila Heath and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at CARLI, met on October 19 to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing.

On November 2, Anna Behm, Jody Rubel, and Leila Heath met with Karen Goyer and Wayne Dixon to discuss details and progress for the new software platform for managing eRead Illinois subscriptions.

Career Online High School Update

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

COHS Stats as of October 31, 2023

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
416	178	122	60%/53%

Explore More Illinois Update

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

In October 2023, 1,465 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in September were Brookfield Zoo (315), Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200), Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie (21), DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (15), and Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (11). The most popular Chicago attractions in July were the Art Institute of Chicago (225), Field Museum (167), Museum of Science and Industry (158), Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (154), and Chicago Children’s Museum (67).

November 1 starts the last Explore More Illinois enrollment period of 2023. Libraries can submit their information to join through December 15.

The David Davis Mansion State Historical Site in Bloomington joined Explore More Illinois in October.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
333	88	1	4	426

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

Attractions	64
Total Attractions in 2023	76

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

RAILS/IHLS	176
CPL	1,291
Total	1,465

eRead Illinois Update

Anna Behm continued to field questions from eRead Illinois member libraries about the transition in late September from Axis 360 to Boundless, as well as how to access support resources. She has also received several compliments on how smoothly the rollout went.

Anna Behm and Curt Leppert from Baker & Taylor met with staff from School District U-46 to discuss some of the recent changes to the eRead Illinois program and the switch to Boundless.

Anna Behm, Joe Filapek and Leila Heath met with Jack Darden and Anna Curtis from Baker & Taylor on October 18. Jack is RAILS’s new sales representative. They discussed the Boundless roll out as well as current projects and initiatives.

RAILS’s Baker & Taylor Customer Success Manager, Anna Curtis announced she has accepted a new position at B&T and will no longer manage eRead Illinois. Jesse Wilson will take over the role at the end of November.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
October 2023	21,814	17,299	39,113
FY 2024	75,212	64,756	139,968

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
October 2023	1,395
FY 2024	6,205

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

Delivery Vehicle Update

On August 22, 2023, RAILS was able to order two Ford F350 box trucks with a 12’ box from Landmark Ford via the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS).

On October 27, 2023, RAILS successfully ordered seven 2024 Ford Transit vehicles at a cost of \$54,246 each. We will share more details about the arrival timeline of those vehicles when that becomes available. We are also looking to order more Ford F450/550 box trucks as well.

The total for the nine vehicles ordered amounts to \$502,250.00. The total amount budgeted for vehicles this fiscal year was \$750,000.00 therefore leaving adequate room to purchase the additional vehicles required.

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.

Find More Illinois was part of the conversation at the 2023 ILA Annual Conference. Participating panelists in "Expanding Library Service Across Illinois with Resource Sharing" included RAILS staff, librarians from Find More Illinois libraries, and a member of RAILS' Board of Directors. Some of the topics discussed included ways to share resources, the benefits of sharing resources, and how to support small libraries by sharing resources.

Fall Meetings with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL

RAILS has monthly meetings with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), and the Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries.

Meeting topics continues to include updates on [RAILS' School Library Advocacy Through Education\(SLATE\)](#) project, ongoing materials challenges, updates on library legislation from the Illinois Library Association and AISLE, and the formation of regional response teams in Illinois to help libraries facing challenges.

This group also reviewed outcomes from the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, the inaugural year of an event geared towards individuals working in school libraries with no formal library education, paraprofessionals, and those considering a school library endorsement. The event took place on September 20 with over 250 people participating across the state. A variety of topics were covered in sessions over the course of the day including intellectual freedom, advocacy, material selection, programming and interlibrary loan basics.

RAILS Report

RAILS Receives New Delivery Vehicles

RAILS is thrilled to have received six new transit vans during the month of January to replace several aging vehicles in our fleet. These vans will replace vehicles in our Coal Valley, East Peoria, Rockford and Bolingbrook facilities. This represents six out of the eight new transit vans that have been ordered. We are still expecting a total of five box trucks for our Bolingbrook delivery operation, which we are hopeful to receive by the end of March.

Welcome Kate Niehoff

We are pleased to have welcomed Kate Niehoff, our new Director of Consulting and Continuing Education, to RAILS on January 8th. Kate has worked in public libraries for 18 years, most recently as the Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships at the Schaumburg Township District Library. Kate has also worked at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, the Forest Park Public Library, and the Melrose Park Public Library. She has served on many committees including her work on the steering committee of Illinois Libraries Present, LACONI POP, and the RLA-CE Committee (now ReCharge). We are so pleased to have Kate here at RAILS and know she will bring great things to our organization and our member libraries.

Public Act 103-0343

[Public Act 103-0343](#), which was signed by Governor Pritzker last summer and became effective January 1, modifies the definition of a newly hired employee to include independent contractors. This change involves the requirement to report business with an independent contractor to IDES within 20 days of hire. After receiving questions from a member, we've asked Ancel Glink to create a memo with guidance on this new law and we plan to share with the Directors List and share the memo via the RAILS website. We have also been in communication with ILA around this Public Act.

Catalog Membership Grants

Three libraries received Catalog Membership Grant awards in late 2023:

- Mount Prospect Public Library - \$73,800.00 to join CCS
- Waukegan Public Library - \$52,050.00 to join CCS
- Winnebago Public Library - \$14,962.15 to join PrairieCat

The final grant application deadline for FY2024 is April 15, 2024. We are beginning our budget development process for FY2025 and will contact LLSAP Directors in the coming weeks to inquire about possible costs for any potential incoming new members to help inform our budget decisions. RAILS attempts to budget as generously as possible for this grant program, within our strategic priorities and available funding.

Save the Date: RAILS Member Update on February 14

We are looking forward to another virtual RAILS Member Update this February. Topics will include a spotlight on libraries serving migrants, the School Library Advocacy through Education (SLATE) project, and more. A full agenda is coming but [registration](#) is available now.

2024 Illinois State Library Annual Certification Opens

RAILS is pleased to announce that the 2024 Illinois State Library Annual Certification process is now open. In compliance with Illinois statutes and administrative rules [23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030.200], annual certification is required of ALL library system members to retain system membership and eligibility for grants administered by the Illinois State Library. The Illinois State Library Annual Certification form has been streamlined and moved to the Library Directory and Learning Calendar (L2)

<https://librarylearning.org/>. The certification period runs from January 2 to March 31, 2024. Check out the RAILS website for more information on how to certify your library.

Non-Resident Fee Card Program Data Cleanup Project

[Section 3050.20\(b\)](#) in the Illinois Administrative Code requires public libraries to notify their regional library system of their participation status in the non-resident fee card program each year. This information is gathered in L2 and supplied to the Illinois State Library as part of our annual report. In reviewing non-resident records in L2, we have found a number of libraries who have not updated their information in several years. After the completion of our annual certification project, RAILS will be working to contact libraries whose information is outdated or absent. In addition to being a membership requirement, the availability of updated non-resident information can be important for future projects related to universal service in Illinois.

RAILS #DeliveryWrapped

You've heard of #SpotifyWrapped, now get ready for RAILS #DeliveryWrapped. We rely on our delivery staff to provide one of the most vital resources to our members. The stats speak for themselves—our sorters and drivers work hard every day to help you serve your community! [More information can be found on the RAILS Facebook page.](#)

The public libraries that received the most deliveries per capita in 2023:

- McCook Public Library District
- Bedford Park Public Library District
- Franklin Grove Public Library
- Cordova District Library
- Hodgkins Public Library District
- Milledgeville Public Library
- Forreston Public Library
- Neponset Public Library

In FY 2023, our delivery drivers traveled 1,173,510 miles. That's the equivalent of traveling around the world 47 times.

In FY 2023, we delivered 7,673,127 items. That's \$135,584,154 worth of materials.

The longest distance that our delivery drivers traveled between hub and library was 151 miles from East Peoria Service Center to Pleasant Hill CUSD #3 in Pleasant Hill, IL.

[Library Review of System Delivery Contacts](#)

All libraries receiving direct van delivery are required to complete a quarterly delivery count. To ensure that the count is performed and the data is entered on time, we ask all library directors to review the list of library staff designated as a System Delivery Contact to receive notices and reminders for each delivery count. [For more information and next steps please see the RAILS website.](#)