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Executive Director Report, October 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Peoria

It was such a pleasure to see so many RAILS members at the Illinois Library Association Conference in Peoria on October 8-10. It is a highlight of our year to get to see so many RAILS staff, Board members, and RAILS members in one central location. Special thanks to so many of our RAILS Board for helping to staff the RAILS booth – we saw and spoke with so many members this year and our Communications team did a great job creating a booth that was memorable and eye catching. I'm eager to hear if you have any takeaways or thoughts to share after speaking directly with members at this year's conference. Please share some of your most impactful moments at ILA during our October meeting.

Additional highlights for RAILS from this year's conference include:

- Along with our colleagues at AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and the State Library, RAILS was the recipient of the Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award for Interlibrary Cooperation at this year's award ceremony. The award was received for creating the 2023 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) and while a number of staff from our organizations worked to make this symposium a reality, I want to especially acknowledge RAILS Director of Marketing and Communications Dan Bostrom for his role in creating and facilitating this important – now annual - event. RAILS and our partners agreed to donate the \$500 financial award to the ILA Diversity Scholarship Fund, which supports the [Sylvia Murphy Williams Award](#) recipients.
- So many RAILS staff and Board members presented and/or participated on this year's conference committee. There are more details included in the RAILS report. I had the pleasure of facilitating a panel on library value, which included great presentations from RAILS' Janette Derucki about the Agencies of Impact report and Mark Hatch about the impacts of delivery throughout the state.
- Rene Leyva, Gwen Gregory, and Jean Carroll of the RAILS Executive Committee joined myself, Leslie Bednar, and three representatives from the Illinois Heartland Library System Board for a social dinner to get to know one another better. We really appreciate the opportunity to connect with our sister system leadership, and hope for more opportunities for connection in the future. Thanks again to our RAILS representatives for taking time during your busy ILA Annual conference to attend!

Illinois Legislative Updates

ILA's Public Policy Committee met on September 30. Legislative priorities related to the Libraries Connected proposal (related to providing complimentary internet service to libraries in their role as community anchor institutions; RAILS co-sponsored this proposal) and Considering Equitable Compensation Reporting Requirements (related to the requirement for posting salary information for any employer of an IMRF participating organization for any employee making over \$75k) were both accepted as priorities by the ILA Executive Board at their September meeting.. ILA Lobbyist Derek Blaida discussed potential strategies for moving these efforts forward.

There was also discussion of the AISLE efforts related to the creation of a legislative task force to investigate requiring a certified school librarian in every school. Gail Meyer, AISLE's Advocacy Chair, also spoke to the RAILS Advocacy committee about these efforts at their September meeting.

This month I also attended two subcommittee meetings for this PPC, one related to efforts to support changes to the Open Meetings Act and one related to the development of a compiled statutes project. I also manned an informational table for the Public Policy Committee at the ILA Annual Conference. The next ILA PPC meeting is scheduled for November 4.

RAILS Supervisory and Executive Team Development

We are continuing to develop our own supervisory and management teams here at RAILS to ensure an environment dedicated to learning and growth. Our quarterly supervisory meeting on October 2 was dedicated to employment practice liability training, and was facilitated by Tracy Lesiak from Gallagher Bassett. Topics included hiring practices and interviewing, employment evaluations, documentation, termination, laws and regulations, types of discrimination, and retaliation. This training was available to us free of charge because of our participation in LIRA (Libraries of Illinois Risk Agency).

Our Executive Team is participating in an offsite training on Wednesday, October 23rd. I want to offer our appreciation to Paul Mills and the Fountaindale Public Library for allowing us to use their space for our learning. The day, facilitated by the Charmm'd Foundation, is dedicated to understanding personal and team dynamics through DISC assessment, individual reflection, and team reflection. Our Executive Team has seen a lot of changes over the last few years and my hope is that this will be a day for us to learn from, support, and get to know one other better through an opportunity for development.

Leadership in Illinois Libraries Discussion

RAILS continues to receive requests from members to explore some leadership training for libraries throughout our service area. Kate Niehoff, RAILS Director of Consulting and Continuing Education, has been leading these efforts, including discussing needs and ideas with members and library partners across the state. As you know, RAILS budgeted for something related to leadership training in FY2025 but we are very interested in the Board's perspective on the specific gaps and needs related to library leadership training in Illinois right now. I would like us to discuss this in more detail at our November meeting, and I wanted to give you the opportunity to formulate your thoughts and speak with your networks about needs related to leadership and continuing education opportunities across our service area.

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

IMLS Grant Opportunity

RAILS has committed support to the IMLS funded [iLead: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders with an EDI Lens](#). The initiative, which is designed as a no-cost, open-access national leadership program has a focus on inclusive leadership. We are serving as part of a coalition including Chicago Public Library and the Illinois Library Association, as well as many other national partners in the event that the next stage of this project is funded by IMLS. The regional group is currently scheduling its first meeting for November 2024.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Memo on Treasurer Bond and Insurance Requirements

As many of you are aware, on June 7, 2024 Governor Pritzker signed HB4951 into law as Public Act 103-592. This law reduces the amount of the treasurer bond or insurance policies that library treasurers must provide to their library boards. Public Act 103-592 became effective on July 1 of this year. In response to questions received by RAILS, as well as confusion about what this change means for libraries in Illinois, we asked Ancel Glink to write a memo to explain the changes and impact. This memo was shared with the RAILS membership at the end of September through the Directors Listserv and the RAILS E-News.

November RAILS Member Update

Save the date for our next RAILS Member Update on Wednesday, November 13 at 3pm. In addition to updates from RAILS, we plan to include a discussion of artificial intelligence in libraries from Peter Musser (Institute of Knowledge Management in Education), an update about the ILA Legislative Meetups from Cyndi Robinson (ILA) and a presentation about first amendment audits from Dustin Smaby (Vernon Area Public Library District). This event is a Zoom webinar and [registration](#) is open to staff from any type of RAILS library.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

AISLE Annual Conference and AISLE Crystal Award

It is our conference season, and the RAILS team is really looking forward to the AISLE Annual Conference on November 7-9 in Tinley Park. This year's theme is AISLE L.E.A.D.: Librarians – Educating, Advocating, Making a Difference. Many RAILS staff, including myself, will be there and we look forward to meeting with our school library members. RAILS staff will also be presenting at a variety of sessions throughout the conference.

I am also pleased to share that I have been named the recipient of the Crystal Honor Award at this year's AISLE awards. This award is given for distinguished support of/or contributions to the school library profession, school libraries in Illinois or contributions to the Association. I am humbled and honored by this award from AISLE and, as ever, the RAILS staff truly deserves the credit for the dedicated and incredible work done on behalf of our school library members.

ILDS Contract Discussion

Joe Filapek and I met with colleagues from CARLI and IHLS to continue to discuss the ILDS contract on October 11. Next steps involve a draft of shared talking points explaining the increased costs of doing business with delivery as well as the rationale for a move from 24 to 48 hour turnaround in support of greater efficiency and standardization.

ILA Library Legislative Meetups

ILA has announced the dates for their upcoming series of [legislative meetings](#). This is a great opportunity to meet directly with legislators and advocate for the issues important to Illinois libraries. The meetings covering RAILS areas of service are: Alsip (Dec 3), Oak Brook (Dec 3), Northbrook (Dec 4), Normal (Dec 10), and DeKalb (Dec 10). If you have an interest in attending on behalf of RAILS, please let Emily or myself know. Registration closes by November 21st for the earliest events.

CARLI Annual Meeting – October 22

I will be attending the CARLI Annual Meeting on Tuesday, October 22 in Champaign. The agenda includes a keynote about thriving in digital life, updates from CARLI, I-Share, Illinois SCOERs, and Ebooks and shared serials. We will also bring copies of our RAILS Agencies of Impact report to share. I look forward to connecting with some of our RAILS academic members next week in Champaign!

Looking Ahead to November

- **November Service of the Month and Board Development Topics: RAILS Consulting and Continuing Education report with Kate Niehoff and Best Practices in Online Safety with Wes Smith**



This Month at RAILS – October 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:

RAILS Staff Participate in 2024 ILA Annual Conference

The 2024 ILA Annual Conference was a big success for RAILS staff. RAILS was a Platinum Sponsor of the conference, also sponsoring the ILA Membership Meeting and President's Program with Mychal Threets. Approximately, 430 attendees came by the RAILS booth (including Mychal Threets, right, pictured with RAILS staff).



RAILS staff and board members participated in the following ILA programs:

Tuesday, October 8

- Calling All Catalogers: Mentorship Is for You, 10:45-11:45 a.m.
- Poster Session: E-Z Tips for Website Accessibility, noon-1:30 p.m.
- Trends and Hot Topics in Library Electronic Resources, 1:30-2:30 p.m.
- United Against Book Bans: A New Regional Response Team, 1:30-2:30 p.m.
- Illuminating Digital Equity for Libraries, 2:45-3:45 p.m.
- What's YOUR Story?, 4-5 p.m.

Wednesday, October 9

- Poster Session: Library Worker? Trustee? Why Not Both?, noon-1:30 p.m.
- Time for a Change! Updating Access Points for Inclusivity, 3-4 p.m.
- Poster Session: The REFORMA Midwest Chapter Springs Back to Life!, 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 10

- iCAMP Meetup: Meet Your Match Around the Campfire, 8-9 a.m.
- Fostering Compassionate and Empathetic Library Policies for a Better Work Culture, 9-10 a.m.
- Illinois Libraries: Making an Impact - Thursday, October 10, 11 a.m.
- Everything Old Is New Again: Real Talk About Public Library Building Renovations, 3-4 p.m.

Thank you to everyone who helped with the booth and made this a very special conference!

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

September RAILS Site Visits

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva conducted 8 site visits at member libraries in September. She visited:

- Bertolet Memorial Library, Leaf River, IL (pictured, right)
- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Library, Chicago, IL
- Forman Valley Public Library, Manito, IL
- Orland Park Public Library, Orland Park, IL
- Pecatonica High School Library, Pecatonica, IL
- Thornridge High School Library, Dolton, IL
- Tiskilwa Public Library, Tiskilwa, IL
- Union Ridge School Library, Harwood Heights, IL

To learn more about these visits, see our site visit map, or to request a visit, please visit the [RAILS Library Site Visits page](#).



RAILS Online Roundtable: Back to School, 9/5

Jessica Silva organized and hosted the RAILS Online Roundtable: Back To School event on Thursday, September 5. RAILS was offered one hour of CPD to attending school librarians. Four people attended.

RAILS Member Meetup: Belvidere High School Library, 9/19

Jessica Silva organized and attended the RAILS Member Meetup at Belvidere High School on Thursday, September 19, 2:00-3:30 pm. This event was attended was open to any staff from any RAILS member library. Jessica offered a short presentation on RAILS programs and services followed by opportunity for participants to connect and network. The event was attended by 10 area librarians.

Jessica Silva and Janette Derucki Present at 2024 PrairieCat Back to School Event

Two RAILS staff members presented at the 2024 PrairieCat Back to School event on Tuesday, September 10. RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva and RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki presented "RAILS Services for School Libraries." This session focused on the SLATE Data Dashboard and other RAILS resources for school libraries.

2024 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium

On Wednesday, September 25, the second annual Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) was held. This full day of virtual library training was provided by the following Illinois library agencies:

- Association for Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE)
- Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)
- Illinois Library Association (ILA)
- Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)

This event was designed for individuals who are working in school libraries with no formal library education, certified or non-certified, paraprofessionals, and those considering getting a school library endorsement.

This year more than 250 people registered for the event and around 200 people participated live.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our September 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](#).

RAILS Staff Present at 2024 PrairieCat Users Group (PUG) Day

Three RAILS staff members presented at the 2024 PrairieCat Users Group (PUG) Day on Thursday, September 26. RAILS Special Projects Librarian Jessica Barnes, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel and RAILS Library Resource Specialist Maggie Thomann presented "Resource Sharing Updates from RAILS." This session focused on deals and discounts and Explore More Illinois, RAILS' online cultural recreational pass program.

RAILS Hosts Three Webinar Demos in September

During September, three webinar demos were conducted for resources included in the RAILS Deals & Discounts programs. Nearly 55 registrants learned about topics related to professional development courses for library staff, new e-resources for schools, and a reader's advisory resource.

New RAILS Deals & Discounts

In late September, group purchase sign-ups/renewals opened for a popular performance license and a reader's advisory e-resource.

Online High School Programs

RAILS offers two online high school programs for libraries: Career Online High School (implemented Spring 2016) and Gale Excel (implemented Spring 2024). Stats for both programs are listed below:

Career Online High School Stats as of September 30, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
452	195	74	63%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of September 30, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
13	2	11	100%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

Rockford Delivery Update

We are currently experiencing a staffing shortage at our Rockford delivery hub. This is causing some delivery delays and cancellations for libraries on our Rockford routes. While we are actively working to hire for delivery positions at this service center, we have also recruited delivery staff from our other service centers to assist during this staffing shortage. A communication was sent to impacted libraries and we hope this situation will be resolved in the near term.

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

Find More Illinois Update

In September, RAILS Technology Special Projects Coordinator Eric Bain and RAILS Consortial Services Supervisor Barb Miller conducted two FMI demonstrations for two school libraries and met with a public library for a pre-training information session.

Eric Bain also conducted onsite training for a public library. Eric and Barb also met twice with CCS administration discuss issues related to their libraries' participation in FMI. They also met with Auto-Graphics to discuss troubleshooting issues related to all FMI libraries.



Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of September 30, 2024

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	71	9	1	82

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
September 2024	1,354
Fiscal Year to Date	3,960

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
September 2024	7,302,774

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update



eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
September 2024	25,142	21,433	46,575
Fiscal Year to Date	61,687	59,780	121,467

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
September 2024	1,669
Fiscal Year to Date	5,058

Explore More Illinois Update

In September 2024, 2,307 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in July were:



- Brookfield Zoo (500)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (199)
- Chicago Red Stars in Bridgeview (90)
- Cantigny in Wheaton (72)
- Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (25)

The most popular Chicago attractions in September 2024 were:

- Art Institute of Chicago (454)
- Field Museum (212)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (207)
- Museum of Science and Industry (205)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (58)

In early October, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra joined Explore More Illinois.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of September 30, 2024

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
348	93	1	4	445

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of September 30, 2024

Attractions	66
Total Attractions in 2024	77

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in September 30

Organization	September 2024
RAILS/IHLS	416
CPL	1,891

Total	2,307
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Models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion

Examine all aspects of RAILS policies, procedures, and core services through an equity lens

RAILS Delivery Staff Training: Building Positive Connections

On October 17, RAILS Delivery Services staff received training from Elisabeth “Biz” Lindsay-Ryan to reinforce the critical role that Delivery staff play in the relationships RAILS has with its member libraries. The session focused specifically on the Delivery role and how Delivery staff can help RAILS reach its goals on diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and access.

RAILS Employment Practice Liability Training

On October 2, all RAILS Managers received training on employment practices, including hiring practices and interviewing, employment evaluations, documentation, types of discrimination, and other issues where liability and compliance are a concern.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

RAILS Now Offering PDH Credit to School Library Staff as an ISBE-Approved Provider

The upcoming CE webinar on October 22, “Collection Management for Today’s School Library,” marks the beginning of RAILS offering state-approved professional development credits for school library staff. We’re excited about the positive impact this initiative will have on the professional growth of library staff in our service area and our ongoing commitment to supporting school libraries

Recent CE Events

- **“Transforming Libraries for a Sustainable Future,”** webinar, September 23
Attendees learned how the Sustainable Libraries Initiative’s Sustainable Libraries Certification Program (SLCP) helps libraries enhance their commitment to environmental, economic, and social sustainability. A panel of experienced library leaders who have successfully navigated the certification process and are seeing the rewards of their efforts in areas like energy, waste management, and community resilience presented on their favorite programs, resources, and key lessons learned. Attendees left with practical insights on replicating these successes, participating in similar processes, and finding support for their own sustainability initiatives.
- **“Copyright, Text Mining, and AI,”** webinar, October 2
This workshop provided an overview of the legal considerations for researchers, creatives, and professionals navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of AI. Participants learned about ownership, fair use, and legal obligations when using copyrighted material to build AI tools and when

incorporating AI into their work. The workshop also discussed how AI is shaping the academic publishing landscape, particularly its impact on text mining for research purposes.

- **“Deepfakes: How Computers See and Mimic Us,”** webinar, October 15
- This workshop provided a beginner-friendly overview of how artificial intelligence tools interpret pictures and sound to generate new images, video, and voices. They discussed how these techniques are being used for research and in the film industry, and identified strategies for recognizing deep fakes and tools that you can use to protect your image and voice.

Upcoming CE Events

- **“Collection Management for Today’s School Library,”** webinar, October 22
Kelly Burns Davis will teach the basics of how your community uses your collection and how you can assess it to ensure it’s as effective as possible. You’ll learn how to develop a diverse collection that stays on top of current trends and includes materials that will be in high demand among your students. You’ll also gain ideas for making your collection accessible and inviting to your school community. You’ll walk away with strategies for managing your collection budget and for funding the purchase of new materials.
- **“Mental Health First Aid Training,”** Two Sessions: RAILS Burr Ridge, October 23; and Bloomington Public Library, November 19
The National Alliance on Mental Health will teach library staff how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training will give them the skills they need to reach out and provide initial help and support to patrons who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.
- **“Amanda Jones, ‘That Librarian’ and a Journey to Protect Intellectual Freedom,”** webinar, October 28
Libraries are seeing an unprecedented number of book challenges and attacks on our nation's libraries. Amanda Jones – a school librarian from Louisiana and author of *That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America* – talks about her journey from being the target of a harassment campaign to finding the positives and deciding to fight back. Librarians and authors are a force to be reckoned with and by standing together there is hope in the darkness.
- **“Ask the Web Accessibility Expert,”** webinar, November 21
In this interactive session, Mark McCarthy, Lead Accessibility Engineer and IT Accessibility Liaison at the University of Illinois, will tailor the discussion to the specific topics and questions you submit during registration. Mark will prioritize your questions, allowing for in-depth exploration of the topics that matter most to you. A portion of the session will be dedicated to follow-up Q&A, giving you the opportunity to get expert advice on your specific challenges and concerns.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

RAILS Launches New Podcast for School Library Workers

RAILS launched a new podcast in collaboration with Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) called [*Can’t Shelve This*](#). The series is produced by RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski and is co-hosted by RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory. Eight hour-long episodes will be released throughout the 2024-2025 school year featuring guests from across

the country. You can now listen to the first two episodes on popular streaming platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and iHeartRadio. A video version of the podcast is available on YouTube.

FY2026 LLSAP Support Grant

RAILS staff are now working on reviewing applications and determining allocations for the FY2026 LLSAP Support Grant. The awards will be announced in late October.

October Partnership Meeting

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.

October meeting topics included:

- A discussion of materials challenges in Illinois libraries
- Updates on AISLE's task force on getting a certified school librarian in every school
- A recap of the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium
- Updates on the upcoming ILA and AISLE conferences

And much more! We will continue to keep the board updated on these meetings.

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Anne Slaughter Appointed to PLA Digital Literacy Advisory Group

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter was named to the Public Library Association (PLA) Digital Literacy Advisory Group. The charge of the group is to "help public libraries meet community needs related to digital literacy and use of technology." The group will begin meeting in October 2024.

Maggie Thomann Serves on ILA Conference Committee

RAILS Library Resource Specialist Maggie Thomann served on the 2024 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference Planning Committee. The committee was responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing the 2024 ILA Annual Conference. She worked on several initiatives including the New Attendee Meetup, a Spark, Play, Game area, Awards luncheon, and a community service partnership with Peoria Proud.

Kate Niehoff Appointed to ILA Nominating Committee

RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff joined the 2025 Illinois Library Association Nominating Committee to help develop the next slate of candidates for the ILA Executive Board.

Diana Rusch Appointed to ALA Online Learning Committee

RAILS Consulting and Continuing Education Specialist Diana Rusch has been selected to serve on the Online Learning Committee for ALA's Learning Round Table starting in October 2024.

RAILS CCS Members Collaborate in Library Card Sign-Up Month Video

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) libraries created [a video on social media](#) to promote Library Card Sign-Up Month in September. Twenty five RAILS members libraries can be seen “passing” library cards from library to library.

RAILS & First Amendment Audits

With the rise of First Amendment audits occurring at libraries across the country, RAILS is currently assessing our internal practices should an auditor visit a service center. While there is no requirement that a library system facility be continuously open to the public, there are circumstances in which members of the public should not be denied access. These would include RAILS board and committee meetings as well as seeking compensation information required under P.A. 97-609. We are receiving guidance from our attorney on this issue and will create guidelines for RAILS staff based on their recommendations.

RAILS IT Update

The RAILS IT team had a busy September. One of the highlights included purchasing new network switches for RAILS service centers. RAILS IT also completed a project to install custom charging boards for delivery iPads at the East Peoria and Rockford hubs. The team also worked on updating the delivery iPad to include extra security for sensitive data. RAILS IT is working on testing a structured and collaborative approach to the ongoing maintenance and feature development of RAILS-developed applications (e.g. the delivery app, HR app, and others).

Burr Ridge Furniture Update

RAILS is currently assessing office furniture needs within individual offices at our Burr Ridge service center. While some offices have received updated furnishings over the last few years, several others contain furnishings that are significantly older. We will be working with staff to address individual needs and create a replacement schedule based on the feedback received. Furniture updates will begin during the current fiscal year and will be budgeted for in subsequent years.





SEPTEMBER 2024: analytics



FOLLOWERS

August 2024

September 2024





 Facebook	2,533	2,561
 Instagram	1,464	1,466
 Twitter/X	1,443	1,440
 LinkedIn	1,639	1,677



REACH

August 2024

September 2024





 Facebook	15,334	7,189
 Instagram	1,779	1,143
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	N/A	N/A



IMPRESSIONS

August 2024

September 2024





 Facebook	N/A	N/A
 Instagram	5,886	4,029
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	5,507	5,165



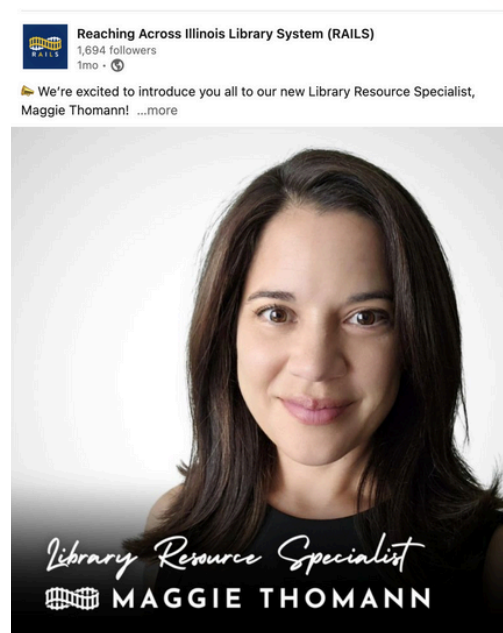
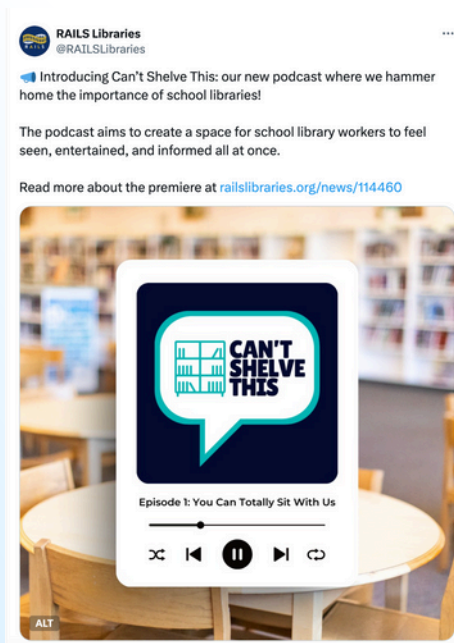
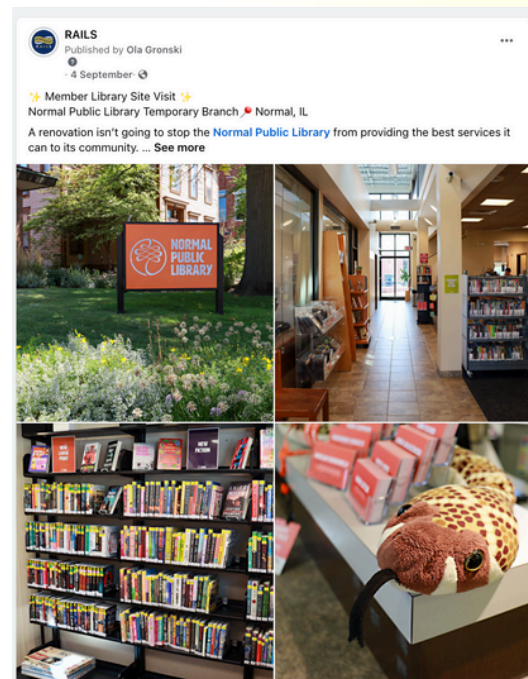
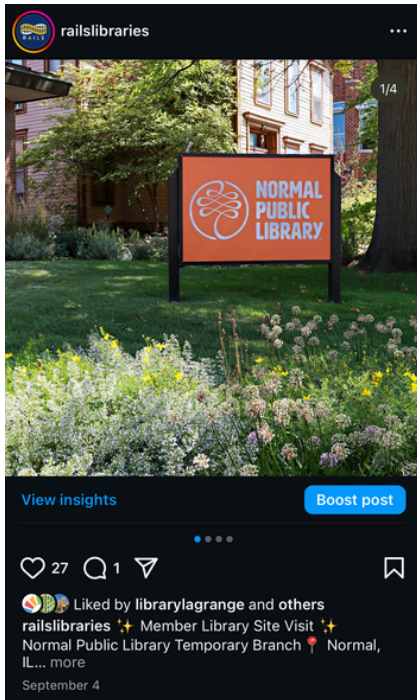
ENGAGEMENT

August 2024

September 2024

 Facebook	1,434	2,002
 Instagram	429	259
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	212	178

SEPTEMBER 2024: top posts



Consortial Reports

October 21, 2024

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

CARLI Governance Board

The CARLI Governance Board endorsed a [Statement on the Importance of Librarians in Academic Libraries](#).

The CARLI Annual Meeting will be October 22, 2024, in Champaign. CARLI holds an Annual Directors Meeting on the same date.

I-Share

As of August 2024, resource sharing is now available for the five libraries added to I-Share in June 2024. Those libraries are Chicago Theological Seminary, City Colleges of Chicago, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, and Prairie State College.

CARLI implemented [Alma Anonymization](#) without issue in July 2024 (wrong date in last report).

New Member

Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library, Theosophical Society in America

Staff

In October 2024, CARLI will have a new staff member to fill our open electronic services coordinator position.

CARLI will be hiring an additional staff member this fall to fill a new position whose primary responsibilities will be to support I-Share Libraries.

Collections

The Digital Public Library of America is in the process of selecting a new home for their cultural heritage metadata aggregation project, of which the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub (IDHH) is a service hub. An announcement is expected this fall. Aggregation services will continue throughout the transition. IDHH will be represented at the Illinois Library Association Conference and at the Association of Illinois School Library Educators Conference.

Continuing Education

More than 300 people attended the Free People Read Freely Symposium, a two-day event co-sponsored by the University of Illinois System, CARLI, and the University of Illinois Press. The event was held at the Krannert Center and I Hotel and Illinois Conference Center August 20-21.

CARLI has announced [CARLI Counts](#) Cohort 6.

CARLI will serve as co-host along with Atla, Illinois Heartland Library System, Reaching Across Illinois Library System for the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) Conference being held in Chicago on May 4-7, 2025.

Grants

CARLI, along with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Library, has been awarded a \$143,489 LB21 IMLS Planning Grant to plan a national continuing education program to develop academic library workers' assessment skills. The Consortial Collaboration for Academic Library Leadership Success (CCALLS) will be based on the successful CARLI Counts program for assessment training.

The Professional Development Alliance, of which CARLI is a member, was awarded a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program planning grant to design, pilot and assess a BIPOC Leadership Academy for Support Staff (BLASS) library supervisors without MLIS degrees.

EResources

CARLI EResources staff are working on the implementation of Consortia Manager for the fall calendar year 2025 selection cycle.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

New Members

Mount Prospect Public Library and Waukegan Public Library are now circulating on Polaris. Over the past quarter, CCS was focused on training, data testing, and configuration with the new members. As the libraries settle into their new routines, we will offer post-go-live training focused on reports and other advanced features.

The Vernon Area Public Library has requested membership in CCS. The CCS Executive Committee has voted to recommend their membership to Governing Board. We anticipate confirming their membership in November 2024 and beginning implementation with a Fall 2025 go live.

Staff Member Retirement and Recruiting

Virginia Seward, Data Services Librarian, has announced her retirement after over 25 years of service to the CCS community. She will retire at the end of December.

CCS has posted an opening for a Member Services Associate. We are hoping to bring someone onboard before the end of the year so that they may benefit from some time with Virginia.

www.ccslib.org/employment

Find More Illinois Implementation

26 CCS members are now live on Find More Illinois. Due to some functionality issues, a handful have chosen to limit lending until the issues are resolved.

Discovery Layer Investigation

Our recently-announced user experience testing of discovery layers is the first of multiple phases that will lead us to Governing Board selecting a discovery layer in May 2025.

- Phase One: User Experience Testing
- Phase Two: Scoring and Data Synthesis

- Phase Three: Vendor Demos/Presentation
- Phase Four: Governing Board Decision
- Phase Five: Negotiation and Implementation

September – November

Patron Usability Testing of:

- PowerPAC
- Vega Discover
- Bibliocore
- Aspen

Gayatri Shah will lead a multi-pronged testing program to evaluate usability, accessibility, task completion efficiency, user satisfaction, and overall experience of each interface.

November-December

Gayatri Shah will analyze testing data to score all interfaces. Synthesize data into competitive analysis and UX report.

January-March

CCS staff will conduct additional research into high-scoring tools, including vendor demos and reference checks. Some demos or presentations will be open to interested member library staff. We will also request preliminary pricing.

March-April

CCS staff will analyze all collected data and develop a presentation and recommendation for Governing Board.

May 2025

Governing Board directs CCS to pursue a specific discovery layer. The negotiation and implementation timeline will depend on the selected tool (for example, an Innovative-owned tool would be included in our III contract negotiations and implementation would be a different timeline than an external tool). If selected, implementation of an external tool would target to complete by March 2026 to align with our III contract expiration in May 2026.

ILS Environmental Scan

In advance of our Polaris contract expiration, Debra Wischmeyer is conducting an environmental scan of the ILS landscape. During this project she will:

- Conduct an environmental scan of ILS options in the second quarter of fiscal year 2025
- Survey CCS member library staff to gauge satisfaction with Polaris tools
- Collect consortium customer references
- Deliver a report and recommendation to Governing Board no later than February 2025 including:
 - Recommendation to renewal with Polaris or go to RFP
 - If renewing, contract priorities and recommended term

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

Resource Sharing Efficiency

Last year, as part of our strategic plan, we adjusted the holds routing settings in our ILS to mirror the order of the RAILS delivery route. Since all of our libraries are on the same route, libraries can presort their delivery bins, allowing some items to be picked up and delivered on the same day, without the need for going back to the RAILS service center. The adjustments to the picklist were done to maximize this arrangement as much as possible.

In the 12 months following the change:

- The average time to fill a hold from a picklist has decreased by 7%.
- Among holds that ship between two libraries, the number of requests made available in less than 24 hours from the hold creation date more than doubled (+ 125%)
- In total, 39% of holds shipped between libraries are available within 48 hours of the hold creation date. (up from 32%)
- On average, holds placed on Wednesdays and Thursdays are now filled 10-12 hours faster than before. This is likely the result of activity that can now be filled before the weekend. Since there is no delivery on the weekend, holds placed later in the week generally take 1.5 days longer to fill.

Polaris 7.6 Upgrade

In August, we upgraded to Polaris 7.6. The upgrade gives us a new way to bulk-waive fines and continues the progress on getting Tech Services into the web-based application. Future updates coming in 2025 hope to finish this work and start the process of bringing System Administration functions into the web.

Baker & Taylor Acquisitions API

Pinnacle is currently beta testing a new acquisitions API that connects Baker & Taylor's ordering platform with the library's ILS, which brings some major improvements to the acquisitions workflow. Once configured, library staff will have the option to order materials directly through B&T's website. The acquisitions API will then automatically perform all of the necessary steps in the ILS including: (1) Download a file of MARC records, (2) Import the MARC records into the the system, (3) Create the Purchase Order, (4) Create Item Records, and (5) Mark the Purchase Order as "ordered." This functionality has the potential to save a ton of staff time on the acquisitions side of things and we are very optimistic about the development.

National Change of Address Cleanup

Last month, Pinnacle sent its patron database to Unique Management to compare against the National Change of Address registry. We do this cleanup for the entire system every four years. In this year's batch, approximately 10.4% of patrons were found to have a new address, which is in line with their usual findings. These accounts have been blocked and libraries have the option to remove inactive accounts.

In addition to address change information, Unique also provided geographic coordinates and census tract information for the remainder of our patron database. Pinnacle is currently exploring options related to mapping patron activity based on this data.

Remote Work

Pinnacle staff have started working remotely one day a week. Remote work has always been a part of Pinnacle's staffing (before/after meetings, off-hours support, weekends, etc.), but it's never been a component of our regular schedules as it has been for others. We're starting with one day a week, but may adjust as needed in the future. We remain in-office at the Crest Hill Library for the remainder of our schedule.

PrairieCat

This year, PrairieCat hosted its 10th annual PUG Day on September 26-27. This year was held online, as our board has decided to alternate between online and in-person conferences. The 2024 PUG Day consisted of 15 sessions, with a combined attendance of 603. Five sessions were hosted by PrairieCat library members. Next year's PUG Day will be held in the Quad Cities area. PUG Day is open to any RAILS library staff who wish to attend and is free of charge. This year's sessions included:

- Using Excel to Create an Interactive Library Statistics Dashboard
- Adult Programming: Why Should Kids Have All the Fun?
- Booktalk Your Way to the Friendliest Library in Town
- Library Budgets & Finances 101
- Creating a Local Author Showcase
- Demystifying Genre
- iLEAD Trustee
- Resource Sharing Updates from RAILS
- Community Connection: All-Ages Programming on a Tight Budget
- Censorship Is Not Going Away: Protecting Library Collections, Engaging Community, and Recognizing the Impact of Library Work On Mental Health in the 2020s
- Artificial Intelligence and You: An AI Primer for Library Workers
- CMC: Connecting Your Community to Your Collection
- What's New with Innovative, Sierra, and Vega Discover
- Book Hospital
- Enhancing Your Email Notices - LX Starter for Consortia

In addition to PUG Day, PrairieCat continues to refine our Vega Discover platform, in conjunction with Innovative and volunteers from member libraries. Currently we are working with Innovative to develop their staff interface that will allow each library to design their own catalog homepage and update their information as they see fit. We should shortly be launching our new PrairieCat Kid's Cat, as well. Work also continues with the LX Starter notices product; however, given our large size this has presented us with some unique challenges.

One fully participating library, Maple Park Public Library, has notified us that they would like to "step down" in membership level to Basic Online. Given they are within the parameters of qualification for that level, we will be asking Delegates Assembly to approve their request at their October meeting.

PrairieCat just completed an analysis of the PrairieCat website in light of accessibility requirements and is in the process of correcting areas of concern. The overview was performed by our website developers, The Cherry Hill Company. Cherry Hill is also nearly finished with the member forums portion of our website, which we have been planning for quite some time. This feature will allow library staff to

exchange information and have conversations around areas of interest and concern. The forums will be integrated into the member interface of our support website.

PrairieCat is also in the process of reviewing options for our mobile app in the coming year.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

No report available at this time.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

Now that RSA has converted to an Illinois Intergovernmental Instrumentality (III), we're deep in the weeds of finalizing that at all levels. Federal and State agencies, our many vendors, associated group purchases and more. The main take-away is that it's much cheaper overall to be a 501c3 than to be a governmental agency! But remaining a Not for Profit wasn't good for our long-term overall health and for staffing purposes.

We've also begun the work of getting everything ready to directly employ staff in RSA. We're talking with a couple consultants right now and will have this finalized by mid-October. Once we have professionals covering all the bases for us, we'll really get moving on this process. One thing we're already hard at work on is developing RSA's new multi-level departmental positions. Right now, we have one level of position for non-supervisory staff in each of our two departments. That has led to staff members departing for higher level positions in the past. The concept we're moving forward with is developing 3 levels of responsibility for each department, with the current position being the middle level. This provides a path for upward mobility inside RSA and the lowest level would allow us to hire staff at lower levels of experience and grow them inside our organization.

As part of the process working with all our libraries to approve the governance conversion and our new fee structure, we found a wide-spread issue. Our member libraries know that we're very busy and they had really pulled back on contacting us. They didn't want to "bug you with our small issues." Researching this surprising phenomenon we found that libraries were using the system in various creative ways to around the system to allow them to sort-of do the thing they wanted rather than having us adjust the system to work FOR them. For example, we found over 20 libraries who had become fine-free but never told RSA so we could make the system stop charging fines on patrons. No big deal our members would say, we just forgive the overdues and use fine-free discharge, what's the big deal? The revelation that this was widespread led to the following new programs.

Parameter Parties! Not the fun eat cake kind of party, but a party none-the-less. We developed a 50+ question review of all the library's current system settings, report settings, notice reports, website settings, patron profiles, cataloging options and more. Our staff do two or so hours of research per member upfront, then visit the member virtually or in person and ask them how they use the system, while comparing what the system is actually configured to do. Each Parameter Party generates anywhere between 5 and 25 individual help desk tickets post meeting as we fix anything we find, update the system to make it work better for our members, and do a lot of clean up.

FYI, I'd suggest giving this idea a look in your consortia. COVID and the associated staff turnover caused huge drifts in ILS system usage. We've found even our biggest members had several things they didn't know we could help them do or how easily we could tweak the system to work better for them.

We also developed a multi-prong “Bug Us” campaign. One part of the campaign has its own adorable bug mascot, some suggested things to bug us about depending on what department or type of campaign part we’re advertising, and all our contact info. No really, we WANT you to bug us! We’ve released the first overall “Bug Us” materials, just this week we ordered the Cataloging department’s “Bug Us” materials, and we just finalized the RSA Board’s “Bug Us” business cards. We’ve got 2 more campaigns in the hopper for the remainder of the fiscal year. The increase in questions and feedback from libraries was almost instantaneous with the launch of the first campaign so we already consider it a success.

We continue to update, streamline, and improve findability on the RSA Support Site. Our members are finding the updates, particularly our new fully indexed listing of all RSA documentation, grouped by topic, and our new Operations Manual. We’ve started work on School member specific pages and a School Operations Manual now. Staff turnover in schools means we need to ensure they have the most direct level of discovery.

Our Cataloging Department revised our 3-day, 6 hour long Basic Cataloging course down to a single 4-hour session. The first teaching of that course went well, and we believe it will lead to increased attendance. They continue to visit 3 or 4 members a month to do on-site cataloging visits. These visits are more free style than the Parameters Parties and are designed to help each member with whatever issues in cataloging they may have.

All-in-all, RSA made 57 member visits in July, August, and September, well over half of which were in that member’s library. Our goal is to visit each of our 135 members by the end of the fiscal year, then at least once every two years after that.

[System Wide Automated Network \(SWAN\)](#)

[Aspen Discovery 501c3 & Governance](#)

The Aspen community is starting the step to create an independent non-profit organization. This is not unlike the creation of an official independent user group such as IUG or COSUGI, but it will be a much larger umbrella where libraries and companies providing support and software development will work together to support the Aspen Discovery Project.

The Aspen Discovery Project is a library open-source software platform licensed under the terms of the GNU General Public License. The Aspen Governance Task Force is collectively charged with creating a proposed governance model for the Aspen Discovery Project. Governance is to ensure the long-term technical and financial sustainability of the software, its documentation, and its development processes. Aaron Skog from SWAN will lead this task force which intends to release a recommended governance model in early 2025.

[SWAN Expo 2024 recap](#)

The annual SWAN Expo event held on August 23, 2024 at Moraine Valley Community College Business and Conference Center had 227 staff from 52 attending libraries. This year was our 50th anniversary and it included a closing session where we predicted what SWAN will be like in the year 2075.

Sessions from this year included:

- Keynote: From Confusion to Confidence: Improving Mental Health Crisis Intervention (NAMI)
- RAILS delivery: Bins, bags, and beyond! (RAILS)

- Library newcomers & the immigrant experience (Chicago Public Library)
- MobileStaff consultation: bring your library device or learn about how to enhance your tablet experience
- BLUEcloud Analytics Q&A for public services
- Crisis plans from an HR perspective (HR Source)
- School partnerships: Issuing student cards
- BLUEcloud Analytics Q&A for technical services
- Basic copyright for library staff (University of Illinois)
- Utilizing the Illinois Digital Archives (Illinois State Library)
- Local records management (Illinois State Archives)
- BLUEcloud Analytics basics
- Aspen for library staff
- Collection management: Weeding, storage, renovations
- Roundtable: Staff development, library in-service days, & what libraries do for fun
- Roundtable: Self Care in the Balance of Work & Life (NAMI)
- Roundtable: How to deal with difficult service scenarios
- NAMI consultation session
- Circulation best practices: Moments at the service desk
- Be a WorkFlows detective: Following clues to unravel confusing service scenarios
- The 2024 State of SWAN
- SWAN in the year 2075

New ticketing platform & CRM

SWAN selected HaloITSM as our next ticketing and customer relations management platform. We are expecting to go-live with our member libraries at the start of 2025. The onboarding process with Halo involves extensive one-on-one time with their consultants to create our workspace. Aside from ticketing capabilities, HaloITSM has modules for FAQs, a CRM, a user portal, and asset/inventory management.

Illinois State Library E-Resource Program & EBSCO database group purchase with RAILS

50 SWAN public libraries elected to move its EBSCO group purchase to the RAILS EBSCO flagship package. This arrangement dropped from 84 participating libraries to 50, with the remaining libraries opting for the statewide EBSCO package. SWAN provided direct resource links for both EBSCO packages to its member libraries. These URLs are integrated within our remote patron authentication platform OpenAthens. Additionally, the appropriate EBSCO resources are integrated within our Aspen Discovery keyword search engine.

OpenAthens is SWAN's proxy authentication system and provides SAML based single sign-on for databases and electronic resources and protects patron privacy. SWAN has integrated keyword searching of research databases from providers such as EBSCO into our Aspen Discovery, and OpenAthens is key in providing a smooth user experience when accessing integrated e-resources. OpenAthens authentication works with many outside resources, and we have recently completed an audit of libraries' database links to ensure that libraries are using SWAN's provided authentication. With the expected end of IP-based authentication methods within the current web browsers available, using OpenAthens will ensure libraries can provide uninterrupted access to research resources.

Enhanced online patron registration

SWAN will be moving forward with enhanced online patron registration to include identity verification and residency against library service boundaries. We have obtained estimates from third-party online registration providers, some of which have transaction fees based on the identity verification solution. We have estimates of annual card registrations to calculate per-transaction fees for patron verification tools. We shared our findings at the July board meeting and presented the concepts to library directors at our September quarterly meeting.

We believe providing a robust patron registration solution for all 100 libraries in SWAN will help resolve many complications through verifying precisely which home library is the residence of an online user seeking a library card. Through a SWAN consortium-wide solution, residents will be directed to their home library and be provided with a full-service library card without having to mediate card sign-up in the library or be provided with a limited online card.