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Executive Director Report, April 2025

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Updates

Changes and developments about IMLS have continued since we last met in March. As this situation continues to change, I encourage you to visit the RAILS IMLS Advocacy Pulse page for the most up to date information we have to share.

On March 31, IMLS staff were placed on administrative leave and all grants and contracts were suspended. Although it was originally reported that all staff were put on leave, we have since learned that there are 12 individuals (of the staff of approximately 75) that are still employed at IMLS. Since March 31, only one payment (an April 11 disbursement of $67,000 to the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records) has been publicly confirmed.

On April 2, members of Congress wrote a letter to express their concern over the proposed elimination of IMLS. A group of publishers followed up with their concerns on April 3. ALA has issued several statements.

On April 3, several states including California, Connecticut, and Washington received written notifications from IMLS Acting Director Keith Sonderling, informing them that their grants were cancelled.

On April 5, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a lawsuit with 21 other states to stop the Trump Administration from defunding IMLS and other federal agencies. In his statement, he includes the following:

In 2024, IMLS invested $180 million in libraries nationwide under its Grants to States Program, and Illinois received approximately $5.7 million of that funding. The administration's action will threaten hundreds of library staff across the country who provide essential services to their communities.

On April 7, The American Library Association and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) filed a lawsuit asking the court to block the dismantling of IMLS.

On April 9, many IMLS grant recipients received grant cancellation notices signed by IMLS Acting Director Keith Sonderling. Two IMLS grants that RAILS was serving as a partner on were cancelled on this date.

On April 11, RAILS joined our partners at AISLE, CARLI, IHLS, and ILA in a joint statement in response to changes at IMLS.

On April 14, attorneys for the Trump administration filed their opposition to the Attorney Generals case, arguing that "plaintiffs have no standing to demand the broad relief sought in their motion;" that their claims of harm from unfulfilled grants are thus far "speculative;" and that "challenges to grant terminations belong in the Court of Federal Claims." They also argued that federal court is not the proper venue to litigate "adverse employment actions," referring federal employees on administrative leave to the Office of Special Counsel, the Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Federal Labor Relations Authority. An initial hearing in the case will take place before chief judge John J. McConnell in the District Court of Rhode Island on April 18. (from Publishers Weekly, April 16)

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Updates (cont.)

RAILS has continued to communicate changes related to IMLS to members. IMLS changes were discussed on the April RAILS Minute. RAILS partnered with IHLS on the creation of two advocacy pieces, the Potential Impact of Funding Cuts for Libraries (with an audience of library trustees), and How Does IMLS Funding Benefit Illinois Residents? Both can be viewed on the Pulse page.

We have also worked with several libraries who are sharing impact with their communities and local media. Some of those library advocates will be speaking at our upcoming webinar Advocating for Libraries on April 23 at 1pm, where we will also share information about the RAILS Annual Report and Joe Filapek will share information about the impact of Delivery on Illinois libraries.

RAILS Board President Rene Leyva was interviewed for a story for the Sun-Times. We have also spoken with WGN, and with the Tribune for an upcoming story.

I was fortunate to join RAILS Board member Julie Milavec for a meeting with US Congressman Sean Casten at the Downers Grove Public Library this week. This meeting, which was also attended by Executive Director of ILA Cyndi Robinson, is part of a series of meetings organized with federal representatives across Illinois on behalf of the libraries they represent.

We will continue to update you as things change. Thank you for your leadership and your voices about the importance of this agency and funding for libraries and museums.

Illinois Legislative Updates

The Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee (PPC) met in the first week of April to review bills of interest to the Illinois library community. The Illinois Library Association has updated their bill monitoring list and positions available on their website, and that is the best place to check for updates and developments. The next meeting of PPC is scheduled for May 5, and I will be away attending the ICOLC conference on that date.

I am including for your review some bills that have now crossed over for consideration by the state legislature. These have the best chances to be passed in this legislative session:

SB1550 and HB2747: Amends the Illinois Library System Act. In provisions concerning State grants, provides that the grants shall include, among other things, planning and construction grants to library systems and public libraries that are members of a library system (rather than planning and construction grants to public libraries and library systems) and grants to improve or enhance security of libraries. Both bills have bipartisan support and are supported by the Illinois Library Association. Secretary Giannoulias recently sent out a message encouraging support of this bill, which you can read on the RAILS website.

SB0043 and HB1062: Amends the Illinois Century Network Act. Provides that the connection of anchor institutions to the Illinois Century Network shall be prioritized according to the type of anchor institution, starting with schools and libraries. This was identified by ILA PPC as a legislative priority for this year and the legislative proposal was submitted by RAILS' Anne Slaughter, IHLS, and Northbrook Public Library. The bill has bipartisan support and has crossed over to the Senate, with its first reading on April 14.

SJR13: Creates the University Library & Professional Librarian Access & Transparency Task Force to examine the current state of libraries and professional librarianship on Illinois public university campuses and present a recommendation to the General Assembly to ensure that public academic libraries and the educational services provided by professional librarian faculty remains a viable and healthy benefit to Illinois students. This joint resolution passed the Senate and has crossed over to the House. It has bipartisan support and is supported by the Illinois Library Association.

HB1910: Reinserts the provisions of the introduced bill with the following changes. Makes changes to definitions. Requires a library, during operating hours, to take reasonable steps to have (rather than to ensure that there is) at least one person present in the library who has completed training in how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, including the administration of an opioid antagonist. Provides that training may (rather than shall) be conducted by an organization recognized for providing such training or may be created by the library using free resources available on the Department of Public Health's website or the Department of Human Services' website (rather than may be conducted online or in person). Provides that a library and its authorized personnel are immune from liability for the administration of an opioid antagonist under the provisions, except for willful and wanton misconduct (rather than except for acts of gross recklessness or acts intended to cause harm). Specifies that a library may receive an opioid antagonist from any lawful source. Removes language allowing the Department of Human Services to adopt rules as necessary to implement the provisions. Removes changes to the Pharmacy Practice Act. Makes other changes. This bill has crossed over to the Senate and has bipartisan support.

HB42: Amends the Illinois Local Library Act and the Public Library District Act of 1991. Authorizes costs paid by persons residing outside of the relevant library jurisdiction to be paid quarterly or biannually if permitted by board regulations. This bill has crossed over to the Senate and is supported by the Illinois Library Association.

2024 RAILS Annual Report
We are so proud of all that RAILS accomplished in 2024. Our first member facing Annual Report was published on April 8. This report, which was a collaboration between the RAILS Marketing & Communications team and the Data team, has lots of support from individuals all over RAILS. The report is intended to provide valuable data and visuals that help our members to understand our impact on Illinois libraries. I would encourage anyone wanting to learn more about RAILS, or share the impact of RAILS with others, to check it out.

RAILS Minute
This month's RAILS Minute focused on the impacts of changes to the IMLS, the new RAILS Annual Report, and continuing education opportunities available to library workers in Illinois.

Statement of Economic Interests
If you received an email from Emily noting that you should be receiving a Statement of Economic Interest soon and you have NOT received one, please let her know asap. The Illinois Governmental Ethics Act requires certain employees, state public officials, and appointees to state boards and commissions to file a Statement of Economic Interests form annually on or before May 1.

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

IDEC Grant Submitted
As a result of a longstanding project collaboration between RAILS, IHLS, and CARLI, this week a grant was submitted to the Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant program. The three-year project, if approved, will conduct a comprehensive study of digital inclusion services in Illinois libraries to identify capacity gaps and define basic recommendations to libraries for providing best practice digital literacy services. Then it could establish frameworks for creating technology assessments and criteria, and engage an IT consultant for direct support, and help libraries to create self-assessments of

IDEC Grant Submitted (cont.)

technology support. Subsequent years would provide potential solutions to the findings of those frameworks and assessments. Many individuals worked on this project but special thanks goes to Anne Slaughter, who led the development of the project and took on much of the administrative load. We are hopeful for the future of this project as we think it could provide strong support for Illinois libraries in need.

Climate Team

The RAILS Climate Team continues to meet monthly with RAILS EDI Consultant Biz Linsday-Ryan as our committee works towards transitioning to a staff-led team. During our April Climate Team meeting, RAILS Continuing Education Specialist Diana Rusch and Administrative Assistant Mary Kate were selected as co-chairs of this committee. The Climate Team's meeting in May is scheduled to be our final meeting with Biz as facilitator.

Assists Members in Planning for the Future

RAILS Numbers That Count

This new media effort focuses on sharing the story of RAILS impact through infographics and data focused storytelling. Recent highlights have included highlights of continuing education, eRead Illinois, libraries as logistics experts, and how RAILS is funded. This campaign will continue through August 2025.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

New Memo on Posting Requirements for Libraries

Attorney Julie Tappendorf has provided RAILS with an updated memo on website posting requirements for libraries. This document, found on the RAILS Policy and HR Guidance page of our website, outlines the variety of laws that require both municipal libraries and library districts to post a variety of notices and other public records to their website.

ICOLC in Chicago May 4 - 7

RAILS is partnering with CARLI, ATLA, and IHLS to sponsor the upcoming International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) meeting in Chicago on May 4 – 7. RAILS Delivery and Facilities Director Mark Hatch will help to host a breakout on physical materials delivery, and I will cohost a breakout for Executive Directors with SWAN Executive Director Aaron Skog.

Looking Ahead to May

- **May Service of the Month and Board Development Topics: Illinois Library Advocacy presentation with Tim Prendergast and World Language Cataloging Services Program with Nincy George**

This Month at RAILS – April 2025

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:

Over 60 Attendees at RAILS Member Meetup in Schaumburg

On March 19, RAILS hosted a Member Meetup at the Schaumburg Township Library District. This event was coordinated by RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva. Over 60 people attended. The event included a presentation by Barack Obama Presidential Library Director Dr. Kenvi Phillips. There was also a tour and a chance to hear more about RAILS programs and services.

2024-2025 SLATE School Library Census Opens

To understand school libraries statewide, the School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) project at RAILS continues to gather data about library staff, library collections, and library finances. With information gathered from the 2024-25 SLATE School Library Census, RAILS and other state library organizations will be able to better advocate for staff, materials, and financial support for school libraries statewide. The deadline to submit information was Friday, April 18.

Chicago Tribune Pilot Project

All 17 RAILS libraries have been successfully onboarded in the *Chicago Tribune* Digital access pilot. Participating libraries are testing and collecting feedback over the next weeks in preparation for a larger rollout later this year. So far, 40 additional libraries have completed an interest form to purchase a subscription once general enrollment is open. Pilot libraries are reporting positive feedback from staff and users so far and are excited to offer access to chicagotribune.com and the E-Edition of the newspaper to their communities.

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

March RAILS Site Visits

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

- Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Cheney's Grove Township Library, Cheney's Grove, IL
- East Leyden High School, Franklin Park, IL
- Elk Grove High School, Elk Grove, IL (pictured, right)
- Leather Museum & Archives, Chicago, IL
- Richton Park Public Library, Richton Park, IL
- Tefft Middle School, Streamwood, 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.

Jessica Silva Participates in JLNMC Group Meeting

On March 16, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva participated in the Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago (JLNMC) meeting in Highland Park. Jessica shared information about RAILS resources. There were 15 participants.

Can't Shelve This: Let's Get Certified

There is much talk about certified school librarianship in the library field, but what does that even mean? In episode 7 of *Can't Shelve This*, co-hosts RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory break it all down with Lauren Ochs, School Library Licensure Coordinator at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Hannah Fiedler, recently-certified school librarian.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our March 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.

July Deal Renewals

The RAILS EBSCO Supplemental Resources, PressReader, and RDA Toolkit deals are up for sign-up/renewal in July 2025. The Deals & Discounts team consulted with libraries about resource subscriptions options and

pricing for ordering and FY budgeting. During March, the team processed over 155 orders for both new and existing subscriptions for the upcoming July 1 renewal period.

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 March 31, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
490	251	76	62%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of March 31, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
23	7	15	88%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

CTL Contract Negotiations Continue

With the move to handle sorting at our Bolingbrook delivery hub now complete, we are currently working with our outsourced delivery vendor CTL on a new multi-year contract. This revised contract will provide for delivery service-only and incorporate language designating annualized escalation rates. We are hoping to have this contract finalized during the first half of May.

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

Find More Illinois Update

RAILS Consortial Services Supervisor Barb Miller and RAILS Technology Special Projects Coordinator Eric Bain met with Auto-Graphics on March 5 and March 26 to discuss key software updates and NCIP integrations.

Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of March 31, 2025

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	73	12	1	87

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
March 2025	1,157

Fiscal Year to Date	11,726

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
March 2025	7,537,523

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

eRead Illinois renewals and new signups started on March 10. As of April 3, 163 public libraries, 21 academic libraries, 2 special libraries, and 317 school library buildings have renewed their membership in eRead Illinois. This does not yet include libraries in the RSA consortium.

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
March 2025	22,722	20,206	42,928
Fiscal Year to Date	200,103	178,347	378,450

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
March 2025	2,083
Fiscal Year to Date	15,845

Explore More Illinois Update

In March 2025, 3,508 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in March 2025 were:

- Brookfield Zoo (349)
- DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (108)
- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (107)
- Volo Museum (83)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (64)

The most popular Chicago attractions in March 2025 were:

- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (644)
- Art Institute of Chicago (600)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (495)
- Chicago Children's Museum (242)
- Field Museum (189)

In March, Explore More Illinois added Chicago Tempest Women's Elite Rugby in Evanston.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of March 31, 2025

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
349	93	1	4	447

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of March 31, 2025

Attractions	65
Total Attractions in 2025	65

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in March 2025

Organization	March 2025
RAILS/IHLS	705
CPL	2,803
Total	3,508

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

RAILS Manager Training
On May 2, managers at RAILS will receive training on making feedback and evaluation meaningful, and tackling tough conversations. Training is being provided at no cost through a grant from Joliet Junior College's Corporate Education & Workforce Training department.

Recent CE Events
- **"Teaching News Literacy"**, webinar, April 10
  Presented by News Literacy Project (NLP), this session covered news literacy education aligned with NLP's five standards, focusing on skills needed to navigate information responsibly, such as identifying credible sources and avoiding misinformation. Participants learned to evaluate bias, understand the role of a free press, and apply quick fact-checking and digital verification techniques.
- **"Managing Patron Challenges from a Trauma-Informed Lens"**, Peoria Public Library, April 15
  Dr. Beth Wahler helped attendees develop and practice skills for working through patron challenges, setting boundaries, and enforcing policies from a trauma-informed librarianship lens.

- **"Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning for Libraries",** webinar, April 17
  This session explored how libraries of all sizes can assess risks, create comprehensive disaster response plans, and ensure continuity of services during and after crises.

Upcoming CE Events
- **"RAILS Learning Lab: Creating Accessible PDFs with Adobe Acrobat Pro",** online meeting, April 22
  RAILS Learning Labs are an informal, online space for interactive, hands-on learning and collaboration. Join in to have fun and connect with other library staff while building new skills.
- **"Self-Censorship in School Library Collections",** webinar, April 23
  This session will explore the causes and impacts of self-censorship, strategies to avoid self-censorship, and resources for support. Participants will learn to define self-censorship, recognize its behaviors, and describe its effects. They'll also learn practical solutions and resources to promote intellectual freedom.
- **"Cataloging Graphic Novels",** webinar, April 24
  This workshop will discuss various kinds of graphic novels and things to consider before cataloging, such as national cataloging standards, audience, types of libraries with these collections, and more.
- **"Civic Engagement Through a Political Scientist in Residence Series",** Vernon Area Public Library District, May 7
  Discover how a year-long Political Scientist in Residence project engaged patrons in the political process during the divisive 2024 election while fostering safe, respectful civic discussions. Learn about "In-Residence" models for civic engagement and strategies for implementing nonpartisan programs that facilitate dialogue on sensitive political topics. Explore case studies and adaptable frameworks to address community issues through creative library programming.
- **"Tools for Defending Intellectual Freedom",** webinar, May 9
  Join Alison Macrina from Library Freedom Project (LFP) for a training on using LFP's Intellectual Freedom Toolkit to protect libraries' core values. This session covers strategies for compelling messaging, policy development, coalition building, staff training, board engagement, and legislative advocacy. Learn practical approaches to strengthen libraries in the face of growing threats to intellectual freedom.
- **"Navigating the Levy Process",** May 16
  This presentation will cover key aspects of the budget and levy process, focusing on the statutes that govern them, the interplay between law and politics, and the procedural steps involved. Topics include the tax cap, differences between home rule and non-home rule jurisdictions, the role of Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), and the Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT).

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

April 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.

April meeting topics included:

- 2024-2025 School Library Census
- Situation with IMLS funding
- Unite Against Books Bans in Illinois update
- Illinois and federal library legislative update

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

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Diana Rusch Selected to Serve on the ALA Awards Committee
RAILS Consulting and Continuing Education Specialist Diana Rusch has been selected to serve on the American Library Association's Awards Committee. This committee helps coordinate and administer the general ALA Awards Program. Her two-year term begins July 1, 2025.

Leila Heath Participates in ER&L Conference
RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath attended the Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference in Austin, TX from March 23-26. Highlights included sessions on negotiating, accessibility, marketing/member engagement, AI, and other E-Resource issues. There were also opportunities to meet and network with librarians and vendors.

RAILS Staff Participate in RSA Day
RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek and Library Resource Specialists Jody Rubel and Maggie Thomann participated in the 2025 RSA Day on April 10 in Washington, IL. Approximately 150 staff from RSA member libraries attended the event.

RAILS IT Update
The RAILS IT Team had a busy month. They completed prototyping and testing of mobile Zoom Room Setup for remote meetings. They also finished updates to the RAILS Delivery iPad app to allow for CTL to use them in Bolingbrook Suite D. IT is also working on transitioning staff to using OneDrive.

MARCH 2025

FOLLOWERS
total subscribers

	Facebook +36	Instagram +26	LinkedIn +45
	2,612	**1,563**	**1,873**

REACH
accounts shown our content

	Facebook +4536	Instagram +3062	LinkedIn -1747
	8,091	**19,366**	**1,951**

VIEWS
times our content was seen

	Facebook +10653	Instagram +3434	LinkedIn -1747
	26,224	**25,613**	**1,951**

ENGAGEMENT
reactions, comments, and shares

	Facebook +311	Instagram +78	LinkedIn -136
	758	**404**	**125**

TOP POST
received the most engagement

RAILS Online Store

● February 2025   ● March 2025

(Bar chart: Items Sold, Individual Sales)
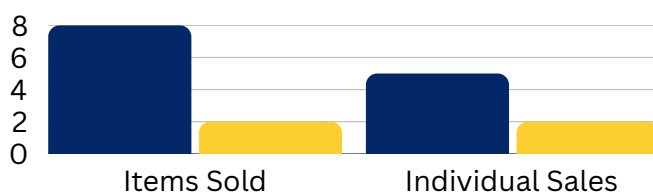
RAILS Minute Views: **2,007**

Can't Shelve This Listens: **629**

Consortial Reports

April 21, 2025

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

Administration

- CARLI staff are currently collecting updated membership, I-Share, and digital collections agreements from all CARLI Member Libraries.
- The CARLI Governance Board annual election is taking place.
- CARLI has submitted its FY26 proposed budget to the University of Illinois System Office for review. The budget modeled reduction scenarios for FY26 – FY28 as requested by the University of Illinois System Office.
- **CARLI Committees:**
  - The Archives Task Force will be a standing committee as of July 1.
  - CARLI has issued a call for volunteers for CARLI committees for terms beginning July 1.

I-Share

- Applications for new I-Share libraries will be available in FY26 pending the execution of the amendment to renew for the final three years of the agreement with Ex Libris/Clarivate.

CARLI Statements on Academic Librarianship and OER Funding

CARLI has two statements available on its website for institutional and personal endorsement.

- Statement on the Importance of Librarians in Academic Libraries
- Statement on the Need for Funding for Open Education in Illinois

CARLI Scholarship

Applications for CARLI's Scholarship are due June 1. The CARLI Scholarship provides financial assistance to current employees of CARLI Governing Member Libraries pursuing graduate studies leading to a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Scholarships may be awarded for both on-campus and/or distance education programs.

Continuing Education (partial list)

- CARLI, RAILS, IHLS, and NILRC will host a webinar on **Consortial Ebook Offerings** on April 28 from 2:00 -3:00 p.m.
- CARLI along with Atla, IHLS, and RAILS will host the International Coalition for Library Consortia Annual Meeting on May 4-7 in Chicago.
- **Building Digital Archives with Minimal Staffing**

The CARLI Archives Task Force is pleased to host this two-day online program on May 14–May 15, 1:00–4:00 p.m. on each day.

- CARLI, Illinois State University, and Illinois Wesleyan University are pleased to host **ACRL Assessment in Action: Demonstrating and Communicating Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success**. The roadshow will be held on Thursday, June 5, 8 a.m.–5 p.m., at the Illinois State University Alumni Center.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

Vernon Area Public Library Addition

The VAPL addition has kicked off and we are currently working with the library and Innovative staff to complete data mapping and the branch build in Polaris. The test data load is scheduled to begin in late April.

MARCIVE Replacement

CCS is moving forward with Backstage Library Works for MARCIVE service replacement. R. Fischer is working with Backstage to set up our rules and practices to ensure a smooth transition.

Find More Illinois

Draft of FMI/OCLC Comparison Dashboard

R. Barth has been working with R. Fischer and K. Lyons on a Find More Illinois/OCLC comparison dashboard. Barth and Lyons are working to resolve a discrepancy with OCLC data.

In addition to this data, CCS is tracking any changes in borrowing/lending patterns as FMI membership changes and will work with library staff to estimate staff time required to manage requests in each platform.

Unavailable Copies Issue

On March 18, Autographics attempted a solution to the ongoing issue allowing unavailable copies to be requested through Find More Illinois. The fix was unsuccessful. CCS, RAILS, Autographics, and Innovative will meet in April to discuss next steps.

Innovative Users Group

CCS staff attended the annual Innovative Users Group conference. M. Landers presented **From Feedback to Focus: Crafting Responsive Training for Library Staff**. Shared CCS methods for balancing quantitative survey data with qualitative insights to develop relevant, timely training initiatives and gave practical strategies for attendees to adopt within their own training programs. R. Fischer led a preconference called **From Simply Reports to Bulk Changes: Reports and Correcting Errors in the Catalog** covering Simply Reports for Cataloging and Serials and Records sets and Bulk Changes in Leap.

Data Analytics Tool Evaluation

After evaluating several potential vendors from across the library and government markets, CCS met with LibraryIQ and OrangeBoy in March. Each vendor received a document outlining our anticipated needs to guide their demonstrations. CCS staff scored each vendor on:

- Functionality
    - User/Account administration
    - Data Options
    - Data Visualization Capabilities
    - User Interaction
    - Data Handling and Privacy
- Implementation & Support
- Vendor Information

Orange Boy's Savannah better meets CCS's needs in that it looks at all areas of library operations while LibraryIQ is more focused on collection analysis and less customizable. CCS is conducting additional research to ensure Savannah can meet our needs and provide value to our members before moving forward.

Discovery Interface Comparison Project

In March, G. Shah led several initiatives to move the discovery layer evaluation forward. Each of the following will be factored into CCS's final report and recommendation to Governing Board, along with previously completed user testing.

- Vendor Demos
  - Bibliocommons, Bywater Solutions, Grove, and Innovative Interfaces were invited to provide front- and back-end demos of Bibliocore, Aspen, and Vega Discover. Aspen is an open source discovery solution—Bywater and Grove are both service providers that would be potential partners for CCS. The front-end demos by Bibliocommons, Bywater, and Innovative were open to interested library staff.
  - CCS staff and Database Management members scored front-end demos and other member library staff were invited to submit survey feedback. CCS staff also scored back-end demos.
- Search Exercise
  - CCS staff conducted a comparative search exercise to review the performance of each catalog based on recently popular search terms.
- Reference Checks and Customer Calls

G. Shah and R. Malinowski will work on a cost and value analysis before completing the CCS report. We anticipate sharing a draft report with Database Management in April and consider their feedback in potential revisions before May's Governing Board meeting.

Strategic Planning

The planned February planning retreat was rescheduled to March due to weather. At the March planning retreat, Governing Board used three activities to refine potential priorities identified in the November 2024 planning survey. The Long Range Planning committee will meet in April to review the priorities identified at the March 2025 planning meeting as well as existing CCS commitments and priorities. The committee will also review the strategic planning timeline, which calls for a plan to be presented at May 2025 Governing Board. In light of the rescheduled planning meeting, this may change.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

New Learning Platform- May 1

Our new Learning Platform for library staff, Coassemble, is set to launch on May 1. Pinnacle staff have spent the last several months reconfiguring our training content to take advantage of the platform's "micro-learning" features. At launch, we will have 12 courses available and will continue to add courses throughout the year.

The platform allows staff members to create an account to save their progress. Managers can be given additional permissions to track the progress of their employees on the platform or assign courses to

specific staff members. Member libraries also have the ability to create and host their own library-specific training through the platform.

B&T Acquisitions API

For the past several months, we've been beta testing new acquisitions functionality with Polaris that dramatically streamlines the Acquisitions process. Once configured, the Acquisitions API allows library staff to submit an order from Baker & Taylor's website that automatically creates a Purchase Order, Bibliographic Records, and Item Records directly in Polaris, saving significant time for Acquisitions staff.

Coordinating with B&T and Innovative, we've worked through various implementation-related obstacles and have submitted several successful orders. We're now ready to begin deploying this with the rest of our libraries that are interested. Innovative plans to coordinate with other vendors to take advantage of the new endpoints.

IUG Conference

Both Pinnacle staff members attended the Innovative Users Group conference last month in Denver, CO. Matt presented as part of a group discussing customizations to the Vega Discover catalog. Brittany hosted members interested in joining the Wisconsin-Illinois Innovative Users Group (WILIUG).

Next year, the IUG conference will be in Chicago in April.

PrairieCat

PrairieCat has been busy with many activities over the course of the last few months. Please see below for some highlights:

Governance

- PrairieCat's Strategic plan for the next three years was approved by the Administrative Council at their meeting on April 4.
- PrairieCat's revised Financial Emergency Sustainability Plan was finalized and approved in March.
- The final draft FY26 budget and fee schedule was reviewed by the Finance Committee, Administrative Council, and will be going to Delegates Assembly for final approval on April 30th.
- We are in the final stages of revising our in-person quorum requirements for Delegates Assembly and the Finance Committee. On examination, PrairieCat encompasses over 4,500 square miles of service area. According to the existing statutes, we are large enough to qualify for the exemption which would allow us to meet at determined remote locations, as RAILS does. The needed bylaws changes will go to the Delegates Assembly in April.
- A new mobile app contract is under review, after a lengthy analysis of appropriate vendor products and several demonstrations.

Member Services and UX

- Member Forums were launched on the PrairieCat website. It is an online forum intended for peer-to-peer discussion around library services and to promote member engagement.
- The Engagement Committee is planning for in-person PUG Day in September. The committee is finalizing guest speakers and accepting program proposals from members.

- PrairieCat staff continue to host a New Directors Welcome meeting to connect with new directors. Staff are also completing member site visits within our service area.
- The Resource Sharing Committee and staff organized the upcoming Resource Sharing Summit. This in-person event will feature several guest speakers and focus on Marketing Your Library: Strategies for Success and Accessibility.
- Online training courses for Vega Site Admin and Homepage Builder User Roles were launched. This allows library staff to manage and customize their own Vega sites including branding, links, and custom content on the homepage. PrairieCat staff are providing online office hours for members around this topic.
- PrairieCat staff are testing ecommerce integration in Vega Discover and plan to implement that in the coming weeks.

IT/Systems

- Systems staff helped set up reporting in Google Analytics on the PrairieCat support site to get a better idea of what libraries are looking for/using.
- Systems staff reviewed and tested backup procedures while investigating possible cost-saving measures.
- Staff are investigating an issue with Simplelist causing duplicate emails.
- We tackled multiple receipt printer issues stemming from the new Sierra update and worked with third-party IT support to address a conflict between Sentinel1 antivirus and Sierra.
- Throughout the quarter, we closed out 142 support tickets.

Library Services

- Over the past quarter, Library services participated in a variety of key meetings, including those with PrairieCat Staff, weekly department meetings, the Training Committee, the Technical Services Committee, the Circulation Committee, Vega Strategic Partners, the L2 Governance Group, OCLC webinars, and the Delegates Assembly.
- Library Services staff conducted multiple training sessions, including one-on-one sessions via Zoom. Additionally, several courses offered through Talent LMS have been revised and refined. Several staff members from our member libraries have successfully completed courses and achieved Item Entry certification.
- The team has processed numerous original cataloging requests, merged duplicate records, overlaid records, created volume entries, and linked items to their corresponding volume records. We have also managed the submission of records from various libraries through the PrairieCat bib-loading process, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the database.
- We held meetings with representatives from Mills and Petrie Library to discuss training and procedural requirements in preparation for their "Go-Live" event, scheduled for May 19.
- We have been in discussions with Mitinet as a potential replacement for MARCive to enhance our database record updates and ensure ongoing standardization.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

This quarter we finished a new contract for our members to sign and return. We decided to update the contract due to verbiage no longer needed (ex. purchasing of new servers). We submitted a grant to RAILS to hopefully expand our consortium with the addition of Chadwick Public Library (Fingers crossed).

Members also decided to establish a reserve fund with some of our excess funds. They voted to establish an account with Illinois Funds, since they had a higher interest rate than the local banks. They also voted at the end of each fiscal year to move a percentage of remaining funds to the reserve fund. The consortium is trying to be responsive to our ever-changing environment.

Next quarter we are looking at database clean up either hiring a part-time cataloguer or an outside vender to remove duplicates, expand on-the-fly records to full marc records and to highlight problem records that need local cataloguing.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

Independence Update

In late February we learned that our EIN, which we were told would not change, is changing. Further, this change must be made as a paper request rather than online per IRS regulations. As I'm sure you can imagine, the unknown nature of our EIN number quickly became an issue for hiring staff as we can't finish setting everything up.

RSA and RAILS had a hard deadline of late March to make the decision on the final transition date due for two reasons; 1) the budgeting processes of both organizations needing clarity by late March and 2), the hiring timeline for 1 July needed to start in early April. Last fall we included a backup staffing transition date for unforeseen issues in our submission for the RAILS LLSAP Support Grant. In March, RSA and RAILS jointly determined that it is in the best interests of both organizations, and current RSA Support Staff, to move the staffing transition date from 1 July 2025 to 1 January 2026.

The decision allowed RAILS and RSA to budget appropriately and move forward with our internal processes. We're continuing to move forward with LIMRiCC, IMRF (where we're being processed for our payment rate), MissionSquare, and other vendors to do as much as possible without a firm EIN. On the plus side, the January staff transition lines up better with many benefits program start dates. We anticipate being finished with everything well before the start of the formal hiring process at the end of September and the October job postings of any positions we need to fill. We know for sure that we need to hire for two positions, an Office and Marketing Coordinator and a Library Systems and Data Analyst. Both will have 2 January target start dates.

Other Updates

RSA is moving off individual, but RSA managed, Gmail accounts. Google's recent and upcoming changes have made it difficult to manage these accounts and the upcoming QR code 2 factor settings will effectively end multiple users in libraries. RSA has procured and set up IONOS emails for all branches in our system. These will be for RSA internal email only, not for patrons or vendors to contact libraries. We are moving all the system emails and end of month report emails over to these accounts 28 – 30 April.

We will then 'release' the current RSA managed free Gmail accounts to the libraries and help them set up the emergency contact information.

Our Operations Department is reaching the end of visiting each of our members to do a Parameter Party. We've done all our public libraries, and 2/3'rds of our school, special, and academic members. We expect to be finished with these by the end of June. We'll then roll into in-person library visits to each member and branch once every 18 months. The Parameters Parties have generated about 700 help desk cases to correct things we found during the parties. 98% of those cases have been resolved in conjunction with the member library.

Both the Operations and Cataloging departments are revising our oldest, or problematic, documentation. Now that our documentation index is complete and we have a full picture of all the guidance RSA has provided over the years, we're finding many areas to beef up, or refine. For example, we're working on consolidating about 18 documents and policies on holds down to one policy and one overall guide on holds. It's nice to move from reactionary documentation to planned, carefully considered documents.

The Cataloging Department contracted from 4 catalogers and a supervisor to 3 catalogers and a supervisor in February. We've decided to eliminate the position moving forward and reallocate the funds to fill the new Office Adm/Marking position. This required shuffling of assigned areas of expertise, and the staff have begun cross training other staff so that all staff can work on all cases. We've eliminated topical POCs and moved to SME's providing guidance so that everyone has a fuller breath of knowledge.

Shoutout to the CMC is making great progress on our cataloging backlog project, updating encoding level M records to full MARC records. There are only 161 cataloging requests remaining to be processed, with the oldest submitted in December 2018. There were several thousand at the beginning of the project. CMC expects to finish the backlog by the end of this year.

All staff have, or will be shortly, working on RSA Day (10 April) session helpers or covering the "Ask RSA" table. This year we have about 150 staff signed up to attend sessions and share their experiences. Again, travel budgets being cut affects our attendance at a remote event.

RSA made 50 in-person or Zoom member visits, training events, and governance events in the first quarter of the year. We continue to try to hold training events in member libraries but find that we're having a hard time getting staff from other libraries to attend. COVID really killed the culture of attending meetings anywhere but in their own library or on Zoom.

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Platform satisfaction survey
SWAN has completed its second annual membership satisfaction survey on the seven library service platforms provided to member libraries.

1. WorkFlows staff client
2. BLUEcloud Analytics reports & data analysis
3. MobileStaff tablet application
4. Aspen Discovery catalog
5. Mobile app, aka Library Discovery Application, aka SWAN Libraries +

6. MessageBee notifications
7. OCLC WorldShare & WorldCat

The responses from 75 libraries and detailed comments are being analyzed and will be presented to the SWAN membership at the June 5th Quarterly meeting of library directors and administrators. This year will be the first evaluation of the mobile application.

Patron Point is selected for SWAN Online Patron Registration

SWAN has signed an agreement with Patron Point to build an online registration application for all 96 public libraries. This online platform will be a single interface for obtaining a full library card and will utilize address and identity verification, as well as library geographic boundaries. The go-live for this service has not been set yet but we expect to begin a pilot program in the summer.

Aspen Discovery & Mobile app hosting provider change

SWAN migrated its Aspen Discovery server and mobile app (Library Discovery Application, aka LiDA) to a new support and hosting provider Grove for Libraries. Due to Aspen's open-source licensing, there are now additional support and hosting opportunities available. Our new hosting provider Grove has a press release about the change for SWAN.

Single sign-on integration

Our project to integrate SWAN's web platforms under a single user login and password is underway. SWAN has switched the Community Forums to the single sign-on. SWAN's new helpdesk system HaloITSM will roll out in May with the single sign-on feature.

Monthly Patron Record Purge moving to 5 years inactivity

SWAN has utilized an automated process for removal of inactive patrons from the integrated library system. There are established criteria used to remove patrons with a last activity date of 7 years which will move to 5 years inactivity starting in April. This is the final step in a long-planned process to increase the inactivity threshold each year. This approach of automating the removal of old user records streamlined our previous bespoke process of user records removal. For example, in January we purged 4,246 inactive patrons, and in February 2025 3,462 inactive users were removed from the database.