

RAILS Report – Resource Sharing Committee

April 28, 2025

Sorting Transition Continues

The transition of sorting work from our outsourced delivery vendor CTL to RAILS began on March 10 at our Bolingbrook Service Center. This reassignment shifts sorting work for items from member libraries located primarily in Cook, DuPage and Lake counties to delivery staff in Bolingbrook. RAILS Delivery and Facilities Director Mark Hatch and Delivery Services Manager Demond Warfield continue to meet weekly with CTL to work through transition details, and our delivery team is currently examining and modifying workflows and staging to account for the increased volume of sorting.

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.

Chicago Tribune Digital & E-Edition Pilot Project

RAILS Deals & Discounts secured a deal to bring Chicago Tribune Digital and E-Edition access to RAILS member libraries at a discounted price. RAILS is partnering with Chicago Tribune parent company MediaNews Group to provide an initial pilot program from March – June 2025. The pilot will include a small subset of RAILS members prior to the general rollout for this offering, who were selected to include representation for each LLSAP within RAILS and a variety of sizes, regions, catalogs, and authentication methods. The goal of the pilot program is to test and collect feedback in preparation for a larger-scale rollout later this year. There has been strong positive interest in this initiative so far, and the Deals & Discount team is excited to bring this opportunity to RAILS members.

Planning Begins for Inaugural RAILS Data Conference

Planning for the inaugural RAILS Data Conference has begun! The RAILS Data Team is collaborating with eight data-minded library professionals from across the state to plan a one-day learning and networking event in Rosemont, Illinois, on Monday, October 13, 2025.

RAILS Moves Forward with Broadband & Digital Equity Plans

Following the release of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the DCEO Office of Broadband's State Digital Equity Capacity Grant, RAILS is taking the lead on a grant application in collaboration with IHLS and CARLI. If funded, the project would support capacity-building efforts for technology and digital inclusion services in under-resourced public libraries across Illinois.

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 Monica Harris will co-host a breakout for Executive Directors with SWAN Executive Director Aaron Skog.

Illinois Libraries Present Moving to the Illinois Library Association

The Illinois Library Association announced in January that it had acquired Illinois Libraries Present, a high-quality online events provider for participating member libraries of all sizes and budgets. In the past, RAILS has provided accounting services to the ILP program. We will soon meet with the ILA to discuss the transition of these services for the program.

Udemy Training for Library Patrons

RAILS has partnered with member libraries and Gale to provide a live, virtual Udemy training targeted at the small business community for RAILS subscribing libraries. Gale has agreed to host the program for no cost in Fall 2025. The training will provide a demonstration of the Gale Presents: Udemy product, focusing on how small business professionals can leverage Udemy for upskilling and building their businesses, followed by a Q&A. Participating libraries can promote the event to patrons, host a live event in conjunction with the virtual training, and access the training recording for a period of time after the event. Twenty libraries have expressed interest so far.

RAILS Digital Accessibility Team to Draft Statement

The RAILS Digital Accessibility Team is currently drafting a digital accessibility statement for the RAILS website. This statement will demonstrate RAILS' commitment to making our digital content accessible to all users, an acknowledgement that work is ongoing, and a mechanism for users to report any accessibility issues they encounter. We hope to finalize this statement and include on the RAILS website in the weeks ahead.

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

The 2026 Monarch, Bluestem, and Lincoln lists were announced on Friday, February 28. This year's Illinois Reads titles and any titles not already in the eRead Illinois collection were added. eRead Illinois renewals and new signups will start on March 10.

RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm presented "All About eRead Illinois Boundless" at SD U-46 Parapalooza on February 28. She presented three 70-minute sessions, which approximately 50 people attended in total. Attendees were engaged during the presentation and had great questions and feedback.

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.