125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
630.734.5000
railslibraries.org

Executive Director Report, July 2025

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Other Federal Updates

Changes and developments about Federal support for libraries have continued since we last met in June. 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 June 27 the Supreme Court upheld the Universal Service Fund, which funds the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program, which was established in 1996, extends libraries and schools billions of dollars each year for broadband access and connectivity. More than half of all public libraries apply for funding each year.

On July 4, President Trump signed into law a new package of tax and spending cuts. That budget significantly reduces IMLS funding to only $6 million. That $6 million would be used to close the agency at the beginning of 2026. Other agencies that support the work of libraries, including the school library focused Innovative Approaches to Literacy grant are also in jeopardy of being eliminated. Spending on these federal programs is still ultimately determined by the Legislature, and they will be making those decisions through appropriation committees soon. ALA has useful resources available through their Fund Libraries campaign. EveryLibrary also recently posted on Understanding the Impact of the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' on Public Libraries.

On July 15, American Libraries published Checking in On Federal Funding, an overview of the current state of funding challenges.

Thanks to the work of RAILS Communications Intern Gwen Gemmel, RAILS is sharing the stories of RAILS members and how they have used IMLS funds to support their communities and strengthen their library operations. You can read more at the My Library Is blog.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the annual Illinois Library Association orientation for committee members, as well as the orientation for the ILA Public Policy Committee (where I serve as Ex Officio) this month. Some formatting changes to the committee are expected this year, including the inclusion of two in person meetings in their monthly schedule, and the elimination of the January meeting. PPC will also continue to have a presence at the ILA Annual Conference so that individual attendees can share their hopes for libraries in the Illinois legislative process directly with committee members. The committee will meet next on August 4.

Anyone with an interest in submitting legislative proposals to the ILA Public Policy Committee should do so before the deadline of August 1, 2025.

Rep. Casten to Visit Bolingbrook Service Center

We are tentatively expecting a visit at our Bolingbrook Service Center from U.S. Representative Sean Casten (IL-06) in early August. Congressman Casten is interested in learning more about our delivery operation and seeing our busiest delivery hub first-hand.

Assists Members in Planning for the Future

RAILS to Work with Supply Chain Consultant

RAILS will be working with an outside lean supply chain/process consultant to conduct an assessment of our Bolingbrook facility. This assessment will analyze all aspects of warehousing, bin sorting, and material handling at our delivery service center. The objectives of the assessment are to identify lean improvement opportunities that reduce waste and streamline the sorting and movement of materials. Over the course of several weeks, our consultant will conduct an on-site assessment, create an assessment report, and will be available to work with RAILS staff to implement recommended process improvements. Depending on scheduling, we hope for this work to commence this fall.

RAILS Minute

This month's RAILS Minute focused on the results of the RAILS Board election, key updates on federal and IMLS funding, a new digital equity opportunity for suburban Cook County libraries, and a spotlight on the impactful work from the RAILS Data Team.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Directors University On Demand

I had the pleasure of a recording a session with my colleague Leslie Bednar, Executive Director of the Illinois Heartland Library System, on the importance of Library Systems for the new Directors University On Demand series. This series is intended to provide an overview of important information for new Illinois library directors that can be viewed asynchronously as new directors come onboard. The annual Directors University will still continue in person in early August, and I will join the group on August 5 in Bloomington to meet with new directors and share more about RAILS and the importance of the library systems.

Illinois State Library Advisory Committee

The Illinois State Library's Advisory Committee will meet next on August 28

Looking Ahead to August

- **August Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS Communications and Overview of School Libraries from AISLE Executive Secretary Carolyn Kinsella**
- **Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act Report from FY2025**
- **RAILS Six-month Investment Portfolio Review**

This Month at RAILS – July 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:

RAILS Catalyst Applications Now Open

We're excited to share that [RAILS Catalyst](#) is now accepting applications! This new leadership development program is open to staff at RAILS member libraries and is the first big leadership training effort in Illinois since before the pandemic. Catalyst came together thanks to input from a group of RAILS library directors, middle managers, and aspiring leaders who saw a real need to support current and future library leaders. Applications are open now and will close on August 15.

Can't Shelve This Season One Finale

In "Thnks Fr Th Mmrs," RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory go straight to the source for school library wisdom: Oak Lawn-Hometown Middle School Librarian Heather McCarthy and two of her eighth graders, Emily and Nathan! Together, they talk about what it feels like to have a school with a thriving library, and what you can do to help build one. Listen now on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [YouTube,](#) and more.

July 1 Start Date for *Chicago Tribune* Digital Access Product

RAILS worked with MediaNews Group to onboard an initial group of 39 libraries for a July 1 start date of *Chicago Tribune* digital access. Interest in the product has continued to be high, and MediaNews Group will continue to onboard additional RAILS libraries as they have capacity. Approximately 28 more libraries are slated to be onboarded by 10/1/25. Subscribing libraries have provided positive feedback about the resource and the positive impact it has had on members of the community. Comments received through feedback surveys included:

- *"I looove this. Super user-friendly and great for folks who like to consume news via desktop or device!"*
- *"The online edition is exactly what you would expect from an online newspaper. The digital edition is terrific to read on a large screen; it is crisp and vibrant!"*
- *"It works exactly as my paid version did, so I'm very happy using it through the library."*
- *"Thank you for making this available—we are excited!"*

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

May RAILS Site Visits

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

- Chicago State University, Chicago, IL
- Kane County Law Library, St. Charles, IL (pictured, right)
- Oak Forest High School, Oak Forest, IL
- SAE Institute, Chicago, IL
- Wallace Township Library, Wallace, 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 Presents for ISU Students

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva presented virtually for an Illinois State University course for school libraries. The presentation was on RAILS and RAILS resources for school libraries. 15 school library students attended.

Digital Accessibility Statement

After drafting a digital accessibility statement for the RAILS website, we have shared this statement with RAILS attorneys for legal review. The RAILS Digital Accessibility Committee is currently reviewing recommended changes from our attorney before revising and posting to the RAILS website in final form.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our June 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 Renewals

The July 1 sign-up/renewals were completed in June, including the EBSCO Supplemental Resources, PressReader, HR Source, RDA toolkit and more. These group purchases represent nearly $1.5 million in opt-in purchases, with more than 270 libraries participating. The Deals & Discounts team actively promoted and consulted with members about the options available for these subscriptions.

Creativebug Transition Complete

Over 100 RAILS libraries participate in the Creativebug deal, a craft education hub for patrons and to use for library programming. Creativebug was recently acquired by Golden Peak Media and RAILS assisted with the ownership transition communication and library renewals/invoicing.

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 June 30, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
501	267	65	62%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of June 30, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
42	15	27	93%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

In June, RAILS Technology Special Projects Coordinator Eric Bain continued working with CARLI on FMI configuration for academic libraries and the FMI team met with CARLI to finalize decisions about the lender-only onboarding process.

At the end of June, Northern Illinois University agreed to join FMI as an academic lender only library. They met with the FMI team to discuss onboarding details on July 1.

Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of June 30, 2025

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	73	12	1	87

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
June 2025	1,327
Fiscal Year to Date	16,621

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
June 2025	7,541,859

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm met with Baker & Taylor Sales Representative Rustin Howard on June 5. They discussed promotional opportunities for both member and prospective eRead Illinois libraries, as well as plans for the RAILS/Baker & Taylor meeting at the 2025 ALA Annual Conference..

The eRead Illinois renewal period ended on June 30. 286 public libraries, 31 academic libraries, 5 special libraries, 567 and school library buildings renewed their membership in eRead Illinois for FY26.

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
June 2025	16,082	19,530	35,612
Fiscal Year to Date	263,895	238,784	502,679

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
June 2025	1,575
Fiscal Year to Date	21,706

Explore More Illinois Update

In June 2025, 4,542 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in June 2025 were:

- Brookfield Zoo (500)
- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (475)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200)
- Cantigny in Wheaton (162)

The most popular Chicago attractions in June 2025 were:

- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (660)
- Art Institute of Chicago (600)
- Field Museum (468)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (315)
- Chicago Children's Museum (211)

The number of active attractions dropped in June because many performing arts organizations shut down for the summer. We expect the number to increase starting in September.

NBC 5 Chicago highlighted Explore More Illinois on its website on June 29.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of June 30, 2025

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
353	104	1	4	462

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of June 30, 2025

Attractions	67
Total Attractions in 2025	78

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in June 2025

Organization	June 2025
RAILS/IHLS	1,380
CPL	3,162
Total	4,542

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

CE Highlight of the Month
The IMRF: Glass Half Full event on Wednesday, July 9, was a resounding success, drawing an impressive 444 registrants and engaging 346 live attendees. Presented by Morgan Johnson of IMRF, the session offered a clear and comprehensive overview tailored for active IMRF members. Topics included retirement planning, disability and death benefits, as well as the Voluntary Additional Contribution (VAC) plan.

2025 Directors University
Directors University is scheduled to take place August 6 – 8 in Bloomington, IL. Monica Harris will be presenting with Leslie Bednar (IHLS) on Library Systems, and Kate Niehoff will be presenting with Kate Kite (IHLS) on Compliance.

Updated Nonresident Fee Memo and Intergovernmental Agreement Templates
Ancel Glink's memo on the calculation of fees for nonresident cards for students was updated to acknowledge recent amendments to the library statutes and administrative rules providing increased access to library cards for students (the "Cards for Kids" regulations), and information on the calculation of nonresident fees was restructured to clarify the difference in fees for property owners and renters. The Intergovernmental

Agreement Template was split into two forms: one for local libraries, and another for district libraries. Separating the forms and including clear, accurate statutory authority for the different libraries will make the forms more workable. The updated memo and templates can be found on the RAILS website.

Freedom Lifted's Social Justice for Libraries Training Renewed for FY26
Freedom Lifted's asynchronous course allows individual learners to progress through social justice topics at their own pace and schedule. A discussion and facilitation guide is available to libraries who aim to complete the course as a group. It is accessible to staff of RAILS member libraries through September 15, 2026.

Recent CE Events
- **"Trustee Training: Library Director and Board Evaluations",** webinar, June 14
- **"Serials Cataloging",** webinar, June 18
- **"IMRF Member Benefits",** online meeting, July 9

Upcoming CE Events
- **"Teaching Tech Skills Without a Computer Lab,"** webinar, July 21
  This session explores practical, learner-centered approaches to teaching digital skills in spaces without dedicated computers. Learn how to use discussion-based classes, smartphone-friendly topics, and adaptable class formats to offer impactful instruction and build your community's digital confidence— no lab required.
- **"RAILS Learning Lab: Let's Discuss Book Discussions,"** online meeting, July 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. Led by Heather Booth, this session will look at what works, common challenges, and offer plenty of time for sharing, troubleshooting, and learning from one another.
- **"Generative AI In Libraries: Ethical Dilemmas and Opportunities,"** July 23
  Matt Topic, one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in AI and President of the Downers Grove Library Board of Trustees, and Elissa Malespina, author of AI in the Library and the AI School Librarians Newsletter, will examine how generative AI aligns with core library values like intellectual freedom and equity, providing insights to help libraries navigate this transformative technology responsibly.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

July 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.

June meeting topics included:

- School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) update
- Unite Against Books Bans in Illinois update
- AISLE & ILA Annual Conference updates
- Illinois Association of School Boards conference update
- Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) update

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

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

RAILS Staff Attend 2025 ALA Annual Conference
Nine RAILS staff members, including members of the Communications, Consulting & Continuing Education, Deals & Discounts, and Technology departments, attended the 2025 ALA Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

Canva Training for Library Administrative Assistant Networking Group (LAANG)
RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski presented a basic Canva training presentation to LAANG on Wednesday, June 25. Ola walked through the Canva homepage, demonstrated how to work with a template, and provided tips and tricks for common design issues.

Jessica Silva Participates in IL 250 Group
RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva is serving as a member of a library planning group for the Illinois America 250 Commission. The group will help create resources for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Indpenedence.

RAILS IT Update
In June, RAILS purchased new virtual servers for the migration to Proxmox, an open-source server solution. The team also renewed the yearly Zoom contract; the new contract reduces costs by $2,000 from the previous year. A new web-based employee evaluation system was deployed to all staff. The IT team is also working with the Delivery department to migration the Bolingbrook Service Center to AT&T internet. The Burr Ridge Service Center will be migrated in August. Public Wifi speeds at the Burr Ridge Service Center were upgraded to 1GB; the team also managed to reduce monthly costs by $50.

Burr Ridge Facility Update
RAILS is currently evaluating a proposal to conduct an assessment of the precast wall panels at our Burr Ridge facility. This assessment would be conducted by an outside architectural engineering firm and is in response to issues stemming from displaced shifted panels, particularly in the southeast corner of our facility. This analysis would help us in determining the cause(s), extent, and potential repair options for the precast panel deficiencies.

JUNE 2025

RAILS
DIGITAL MARKETING
BOARD REPORT

FOLLOWERS
total subscribers

Facebook +13
2,731

Instagram +27
1,653

LinkedIn +49
2,036

REACH
accounts shown our content

Facebook -3,370
7,796

Instagram -928
987

LinkedIn -976
2,234

VIEWS
times our content was seen

Facebook -8,975
27,474

Instagram -1,459
5,841

LinkedIn -2114
4,752

ENGAGEMENT
reactions, comments, and shares

Facebook -303
973
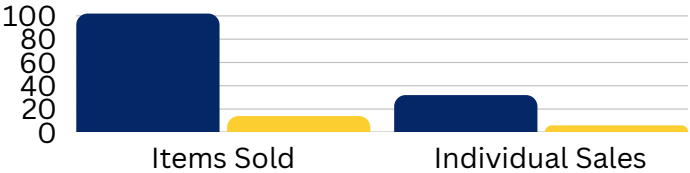
Instagram -89
251

LinkedIn -45
152

TOP POST
received the most engagement

KRISTI HOWE
FOX RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

$114K+
awarded to 2025 RAILS
Catalog Membership
Grant recipients

🛒 **RAILS Online Store**

● May 2025　　● June 2025

Items Sold　　Individual Sales

📹 *RAILS Minute* **Views:** 525

🎧 *Can't Shelve This* **Listens:** 1,197

Agenda item: 8.3

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Consortial Reports

July 21, 2025

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

Anne Craig, CARLI Senior Director, will retire from CARLI in December 2025.

CARLI Governance Board

- CARLI Governance Board meetings for the upcoming year are September 19, 2025, December 5, 2025, March 6, 2026, and June 12, 2026.
- Rachelle Stivers (Heartland Community College) is the Governance Board chair for July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026.
- New CARLI Governance Board Members
    - Term: July 1, 2025-June 30, 2028
        - Michelle Boule Smith (North Central College)
        - Marlee Graser (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)
        - Terra Jacobson (Moraine Valley Community College)
    - Term: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027
        - Brian Keith (Eastern Illinois University)
    - Term: July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
        - Jan Figa (Governors State University)
        - Dennis Krieb (Lewis and Clark Community College)
        - Amanda Pippitt (Millikin University)

Members

- Lewis University and St. Augustine College have merged.
- Theosophical Society of America is no longer a CARLI member.

I-Share: Deadline for applications for new I-Share libraries is August 1.

CARLI Scholarship

- The CARLI Scholarship Committee has selected recipients for the 2025-2026 school year. The recipients are: Allison Barrows, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Kaitlyn Godsil, Knox College; Joanna Kulma, Northern Illinois University; Brandon Neary, College of DuPage; Elynnor Sandefer, Newberry Library; Ailyn Trujillo, Harper College; and Alexandria Vlahos, Lewis and Clark Community College.
- The scholarship is funded by donors who have generously supported this important program, helping CARLI to grow the profession.

Continuing Education

- CARLI is hosting the **Soaring with Open Educational Resources: Furthering the Role of Cooperative Development in OER** on July 29-30 in Champaign.
- CARLI Annual Meeting will be October 21 in Champaign.

Collections

The CARLI Member funded Ebook Program will include in its FY26 Access Collection titles from Wiley, Oxford University Press, and the University of Illinois Press. At the end of the Access Period, July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, CARLI selects titles for perpetual access for all CARLI Governing Members.

EResources

There was a 4% decrease in the total spending on database subscriptions for FY26 due in part to databases that are now covered by either the State Library or CARLI.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

Strategic Plan 2025-2030 Approved

The CCS Governing Board approved our new strategic plan, available at
https://www.ccslib.org/governing-documents

New Position: Manager of Analytics and Technology

CCS is recruiting for a new position, Manager of Analytics and Technology. This position will oversee our data analytics and user research activities and provide valuable insights to our members. Learn more at
https://www.ccslib.org/employment

Once in place, this person will lead the CCS implementation of Savannah and related activities.

Vernon Area Public Library Addition

The VAPL addition is moving along. VAPL staff are in the midst of training, data testing and configuration.

Backstage Library Works Implementation

CCS processed our base file with BSLW in June following the loss of Marcive's services. We have some cleanup and additional testing to do before beginning quarterly updates.
and Records sets and Bulk Changes in Leap.

Discovery Interface Comparison Project

CCS has not yet determined which discovery layer we will use moving forward. In May, the Governing Board voted to clarify that whichever interface is selected will be for all members' use and included in CCS membership fees. Members who choose to use an alternate interface would not receive any discount on services from CCS and limited support on their platform of choice.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

Circulation Standardization

We continue to move forward with our Strategic Plan initiative to streamline circulation practices and eliminate barriers for patrons. In May, the Governing Board approved the latest round of recommendations:

- **Patron Expiration Dates** - All libraries will now adopt a consistent 4 year Expiration Date for new patrons. This aligns with our procedure for doing an National Change of Address cleanup, which we perform every 4 years.

- **Patron Blocking Threshold** - The patron blocking limit has been increased to $50 for all libraries. This will restore access for many patrons and will prevent situations where patrons could access resources at one library but were blocked at another.

- **Loan Period Consistency** - Loan Periods in the ILS will be standardized so that checkout lengths will be determined by the transacting branch. Previously, AV materials from other libraries could have varying loan lengths depending on specific circumstances.

LX Starter

Our first library has gone live with LX Starter - Innovative's replacement product for the standard ILS notices. LX Starter uses a modern web interface and a WYSIWYG editor, giving libraries control over the design of their notices. The platform also allows staff to investigate delivery failures and open rates in more detail.

The Plainfield Area Public Library went live July 1. The other libraries (which are not already using PatronPoint for notices) are working on configuring their notices now.

Acquisitions API

Following the successful launch of Baker & Taylor's configuration with Polaris' Acquisitions API, Pinnacle staff have created a tool which repurposes the API endpoints. With this tool, acquisitions staff can send Purchase Order information directly to the ILS from a spreadsheet like Google Sheets. The API then automatically creates the Purchase Order and any necessary bib/item records.

This tool is intended to be used for large direct orders from vendors who are not configured to provide MARC records or transmit orders through EDI.

PrairieCat

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

Governance

- The final draft FY26 budget and fee schedule was approved by the Delegates Assembly on April 30th.
- Delegates approved revisions to 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 first Delegates Assembly meeting under the new rules will be held on July 30th. Remote sites at the RAILS Coal Valley service center, the Princeton Public Library, the Freeport Public Library, and the New Lenox Public Library will be used initially, with further analysis after the first meeting and feedback from membership.
- A new mobile app contract was approved in April, and we are currently in the process of configuration. We are targeting late August or early September for go-live.

Member Services and UX

- PUG Day 2025 registration is open, and the final program published for this year's in-person event in East Moline, IL.

- 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.
- In May, PrairieCat staff hosted in-person Member Updates at four library locations across the service area and one online Member Update.
- Ecommerce integration in Vega Discover is complete, and ecommerce is disabled in the Encore catalog.
- PrairieCat staff are working with the 71 member libraries that have opted in to the Innovative Mobile App to collect information for the configuration of individual library templates.

IT/Systems

- As a part of ongoing system maintenance, we recently had a successful restoration test from backup of PrairieCat files
- We have finished updating our disaster recovery plan.
- We are now beginning to plan for laptop replacement this year.
- We have re-purposed our old TNS server to allow admin access in case of VPN failure
- Staff helped test the hardware setup for new AC/Delegates meeting procedures
- Staff resolved multiple issues between Sierra and Win11 that were affecting receipt printers.
- We recently updated several receipts for various members.
- Staff completed the annual patron purge, removing 23,843 out of 27,390 inactive patrons owing less than $10. 1,611 out of 14,414 inactive patrons who owed more than $10 were removed.

Library Services

- Over the past quarter, the Library Services team have 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, and the Delegates Assembly.
- We have conducted multiple training sessions, including one-on-one sessions via Zoom.
- Several staff members from our member libraries have successfully completed courses and achieved Item Entry certification.
- Our 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.
- Mills and Petrie Library went "Live" on May 5. One of PrairieCat staff spent 2 days at the library to ensure that everything went well. We had a meeting with the library on June 11, 2025, to assess their progress. Everything is going well at the library.
- We are still testing things out with Mitinet as a potential replacement for MARCive to enhance our database record updates and ensure ongoing standardization. We will continue to update our progress.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

No report is available at this time.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

Staff Independence Update

We remain in EIN purgatory; our lawyers are attempting to contact the IRS daily to seek resolution. Should it get to late July without resolution, we'll take around route to get a new EIN so we can move forward, then correct that EIN's filing afterwords. That, at least, would give us a workable EIN, but is a less desirable method.

The EIN situation also means we can't get O365 licenses so we can get step-up and ready for the cutover. We don't think this will be a problem in the end. However, it's annoying not to be able to get our help desk email setup in its final destination now.

We've finalized our IMRF application and mailed that off to them. Now we await the IMRF Board's action to either approved membership or ask for additional information.

RSA and RAILS are awaiting HR Source to finish their assessments of our job descriptions and pay scale. We'll move forward with the hiring process in August and September with or without that being completed to make our 1 January staff start date.

We will be filling at least two currently open positions: Office and Marketing Coordinator, and a Library Systems and Data Analyst. Both have 2 January start date targets.

Other Updates

RSA has moved from RSA managed, free Gmail accounts for libraries. Google's recent changes made it impossible to manage these accounts centrally, and our libraries are starting to see issues with more than one staff member trying to access them too. We've moved the 'official' system email address for our members over to RSA managed IONOS email accounts. These emails are for system generated reports, intra-member emails, and general RSA business. These are not accounts libraries should give to their public. We hope this will keep the traffic loads small and limited only to RSA business.

We have finished visiting each member library and branch to review and update system policies, procedures, fees/fines, due dates, etc. Lesson learned, our members find ways to work around the system when they change policies rather than just calling RSA to update the system. We've tried to make sure each library knows to contact us so we can make their lives easier. This process resulted in nearly 900 individual help desk cases to correct the various issues we found. We have started our regular cataloging or library services site visits with each library getting an in person visit every 18 months.

RSA staff have done a great deal of planning, process generation, and tracking methodology to prepare for issuing individual circulation accounts to all staff in member libraries. We've been testing and revising for the last month and have the process more or less perfected, barring all the edge cases we're running into. In July, we will start a very slow roll-out of the online Circulation module (BLUEcloud Circ) to some text libraries. We wanted to ensure we'd be able to deal with and track the thousands of users moving to this will result in creating. We already have about 1,500 individual cataloger and BLUEcloud Analytics user accounts. We've been using those as are testing pool for all the new procedures.

RSA had 4 school members, 6 total branches, withdraw from RSA as of 1 July 2025. All the schools withdrew due to budgetary reasons.

RSA added 2 new, smaller public libraries to our membership: Hamilton PL and Camp Point PL. We also have a member adding a new branch this year. All were included in this year's RAILS Automation Grants. Thank you, RAILS! Work for these will start in July.

The CMC has finished their work on our cataloging backlog project! They updated 4 braille, 3,318 encoding level 8 records, and 1,358 encoding level M records for a total of 4,680 MARC records. They completed the project about 8 months ahead of schedule.

RSA held another successful RSA Day event in April. We had over 150 staff from member libraries attend and got excellent reviews afterwords. We had a couple issues with the event site, and we'll be moving the event to Macomb for 2026. This also may allow for new staff from area libraries to attend who couldn't or wouldn't make the drive into the Peoria area.

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Aspen Library Software Foundation

SWAN has guided a task force to create a governance model for the Aspen project, which encompasses Aspen Discovery and the Library Discovery App (LiDA). We now have proposed bylaws for the Aspen project, which can be reviewed from the document link below. The legal name of the Aspen project will be the "Aspen Library Software Foundation."

The Aspen Governance Task Force is a group of representatives from the Aspen Community that has been meeting bi-weekly since November 2024. The group has researched what would be needed to either create or join a foundation, as well as different types of open source software governance. Once the Aspen Library Software Foundation governing board is established, it will apply to be part of the Open Library Foundation, which currently serves as a home for eight software projects.

Aspen Governance Bylaws feedback form

Aspen Series pages: SWAN sponsored enhancement

SWAN financially sponsored with Grove for Libraries to enhance the display and findability of series titles in Aspen Discovery. The Aspen release 25.04 included this feature for libraries worldwide.

SWAN staff are currently using the series enhancements, and we presented these changes to the library membership. The new series pages, previously generated by EBSCO Novelist Select and now generated natively in Aspen, include customization features that will allow SWAN staff to quickly address issues with series display. SWAN ended its subscription to Novelist Select in June.

Online Patron Registration for SWAN libraries

Our project to bring a contemporary online library card sign-up process is nearing completion. SpringShare (now owner of Patron Point) will now fine tune the online patron registration "Verify" product. We presented a rollout plan to libraries at the June Quarterly Meeting. Currently, SWAN libraries are verifying their default profile information for adult and juvenile profiles. We worked with the Circulation Working Group to confirm details of configuration and messaging. Currently we are verifying that our library territory GIS shape files are accurate by running tests on addresses in and outside of service areas. Once this is confirmed, the remainder of our profile configuration will take a number of weeks on SpringShare's end, and we will use that time to draft e-mail verification confirmation messages

and clean up default patron profile data per our libraries' preferences. We expect to go live in August of this year, in time for library card sign-up month in September.

Preventing the acquisition of pirated AV content

SWAN staff Lucas McKeever and Crystal Vela added documentation regarding Pirated A/V content to help library staff identify pirated A/V materials before purchase, after purchase, and how to handle it if already entered into the catalog.
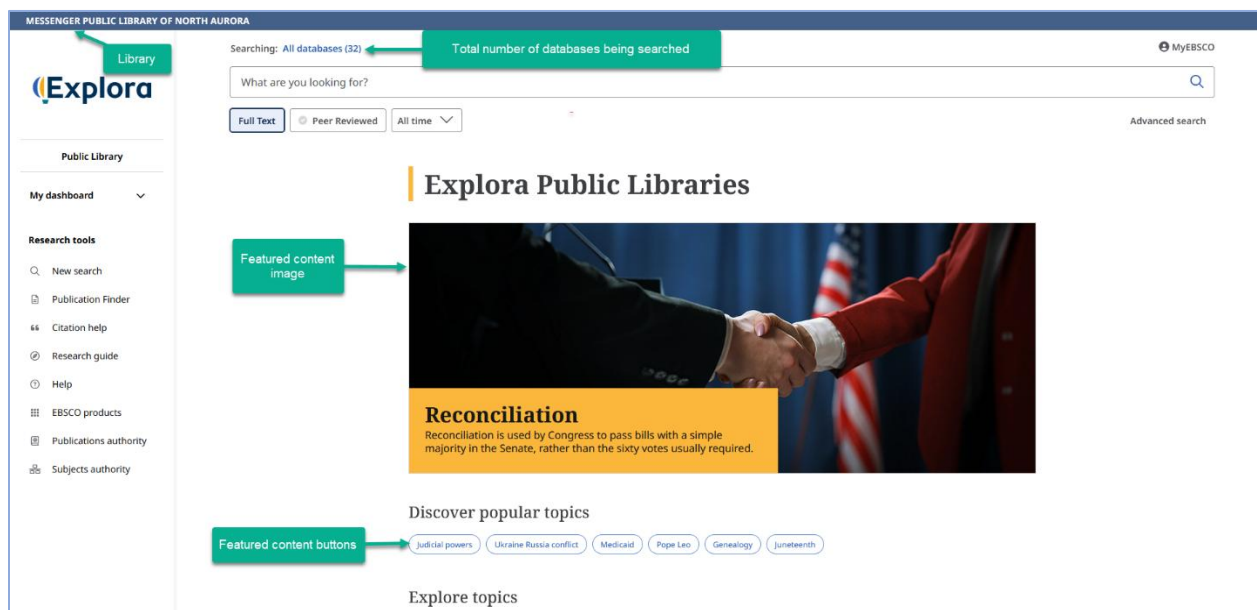
Bibliographic database updates now with Backstage Library Works

We held our kick-off meeting with an account manager at Backstage Library Works, the organization we have partnered with for authority analysis and bibliographic maintenance after the sunsetting of MARCIVE in December 2024. Cynthia Romanowski completed our service profile, which details exactly what maintenance we want performed on bibliographic records and what subject vocabularies we want to track. We will go live with the service in July. The first step involves sending complete extracts of our bibliographic and authority databases to sync our data. The result will be a large upload of bibliographic and authority records. This will require an indexing rebuild on Symphony, which we will perform over Labor Day weekend.

Monthly maintenance operations with their service will work without interruption. Bi-annual updates will mirror the schedule and indexing requirements we experienced with MARCIVE. Library staff and patrons should not notice a change in processing or indexing time.

Explora & Illinois EBSCO research databases

Explora is an alternate interface to EBSCO Discovery Service, which provides curated topics and a more visual design for schools and public libraries. The SWAN E-Resource Working Group completed their review of configuration settings for Explora. Olivia Montolin created default profiles for SWAN libraries to use with Explora.

Chicago Tribune pilot with RAILS completed

Four SWAN member libraries were part of the Chicago Tribune pilot program with RAILS. Olivia Montolin worked closely with technical support for the Chicago Tribune to get the libraries set up with OpenAthens for remote authentication. SWAN has 16 libraries that went live on July 1st. The subscription is for digital access to the Chicago Tribune website and the digital daily paper.