



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

Executive Director Report, October 2025

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Rosemont

I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to the RAILS Board members who volunteered their time to staff the RAILS booth during the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference in Rosemont from October 13–16. This annual event is a critical opportunity for RAILS member engagement, and seeing so many RAILS members, staff, and Board members in one central location was a significant highlight. Our Communications team deserves special recognition for designing an engaging and highly visible booth that facilitated numerous meaningful interactions.

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

- The Unite Against Book Bans Regional Response Volunteers were the recipients of the 2025 Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award for defending intellectual freedom across Illinois. This effort to support Illinois libraries, modelled after similar efforts in New Jersey, was created in 2023 in collaboration with the Partnership for School Libraries and included efforts from AISLE, CARLI, IHLS, ILA, and RAILS. While a number of staff from our organizations worked to make this collaboration a reality, I want to especially acknowledge RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek for his ongoing leadership and instrumental role in supporting this vital effort for Illinois libraries.
- We had a strong and collaborative presence at the conference, with many RAILS staff and Board members either serving on the conference committee or presenting sessions. I personally had the pleasure of participating in two sessions: the "We Do Belong; Candid Conversation on the Future of Libraries" panel, alongside RAILS Board Member Monica Caldicott, and the "A Million Illinoisans Without Libraries? Let's Change That" session, which featured RAILS Board Vice President Catherine Yanikoski and Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek, and myself focusing on nonresidents and the unserved in Illinois through the work of the RAILS Universal Service Committee. Thank you to all of you who participated this year!
- RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and the planning team premiered the first ever full day preconference Libraries Count: RAILS Data Conference in Rosemont. I was pleased to have the opportunity to attend and was floored by the innovation and expertise on display.
- Also debuting during this year's conference was the kickoff of RAILS Catalyst, the new leadership development program. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to meet the new class of leaders from libraries of all types, sizes, and positions. RAILS Director of Consulting and Continuing Education, Kate Niehoff and the Design Team did a stellar job planning the event, and I'm so thrilled to see where this cohort goes over the next eight months! Well done to all participants and facilitators.

Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Rosemont (cont.)

As a member-focused organization, direct member feedback is invaluable. I am eager to hear your insights and key takeaways from the conference. Please be prepared to share some of your most impactful moments and observations from your direct conversations with members at ILA during our upcoming October meeting.

AISLE Annual Conference in Champaign

The RAILS Team appreciated the valuable opportunity to connect directly with numerous school library members at the AISLE Conference in Champaign from October 5–7. Our staff—including Janette Derucki, Ola Gronski, and Maggie Thomann—showcased the depth of our organization's expertise by leading insightful sessions on digital resources and hosting a live recording of the *Can't Shelve This!* podcast. Additionally, our Communications team deserves recognition for once again exceeding expectations with a captivating booth design and engaging giveaways, which resulted in significant positive feedback and highlights their commitment to innovative member engagement.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee (PPC) meeting as Ex Officio on Monday, October 6. It was reported that the ILA Executive Board approved the following legislative priorities at their September 19th meeting. They are:

- Increase Library System Area & Per Capita Grants and Public Per Capita & School District Grants by 20%
- Require Public Library Trustee Training
- Open Educational Resources funding grant
- Making eBooks Equitable and Accessible

In addition to the legislative agenda, PPC is working on the following proposals and recommendations:

- Form a study group on Personal Property Replacement Tax disbursements
- Form a study group on FOIA

PPC Chair Aaron Skog also shared these priorities at the President's Program at the ILA Annual Conference. More about these priorities can be found on the [ILA website](#). The committee meets next on Monday, November 3.

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

RAILS Digital Accessibility Update

The RAILS Digital Accessibility Committee continues to evaluate our web accessibility strategy to ensure our digital content is accessible to all users. We are currently working with an attorney at Ancel Glink to make necessary revisions to our digital accessibility statement. Additionally, our attorney has reviewed definitions within both the ADA and Census Bureau publications and determined that RAILS should be considered a "special district government" for purposes of ADA WCAG compliance. Therefore, our compliance deadline is April 26, 2027.

Cook County Library Digital Navigator Network Guiding Team

RAILS recently solicited Cook County public libraries to apply to serve on our [Guiding Team](#) to contribute to the co-design of the pilot program. This program sought 12-15 library representatives to bring unique perspectives to the new collaboration. The Guiding Team will reflect the diversity of Cook County's public libraries and library workers across

Cook County Library Digital Navigator Network Guiding Team (cont.)

factors like position titles, geographic location, community size, cultural representation, and funding levels. Participation will be confirmed by October 24 and the first meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, November 5.

RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future

RAILS Member Update on November 12

Please join us for our next [RAILS Member Update](#) on Thursday, November 12, beginning at 3pm. Topics of discussion include an Illinois Library Legislative update, a Find More Illinois update, and an update about the eRead Illinois program.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

ILA Library Legislative Meetups

ILA has announced the dates for their upcoming series of [legislative meetings](#). This is a great opportunity to meet directly with legislators and advocate for the issues important to Illinois libraries. The meetings covering RAILS areas of service are: Central Illinois - Bloomington (Nov 19), Northwest Illinois - DeKalb (Nov 19), South Suburban and Chicago - Alsip (Dec 2), West Suburban and Chicago – Oak Brook (Dec 2), and North Suburban and Chicago - Northbrook (Dec 3). If you have an interest in attending on behalf of RAILS, please let Stacy or myself know.

Discussions with IHLS and CARLI on IDLS Contract

Representatives from RAILS, IHLS and CARLI met on October 9 to discuss the ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service) contract. This contract provides for the delivery service to member libraries within CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois). A focus for this meeting were details pertaining to delivery turnaround time as we move forward with subsequent contracts.

Access Amplified Symposium

I recently had the opportunity to attend [Access Amplified](#), a community-focused symposium in Cook County that gathered approximately 200 participants to foster understanding, collaboration, and action on digital access and opportunity. This event, organized by the Cook County Digital Equity Team, focused on key issues such as bridging the digital divide, ensuring access to affordable reliable internet, and skill building in the digital age. It was highly gratifying to see so many of our library partners represented and recognized as essential collaborators in advancing digital equity efforts throughout the region.

Looking Ahead to November

- **November Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS CE and Consulting with Kate Niehoff and an overview of Academic Libraries with Carolyn Ciesla**
- **The November 21 meeting will be held offsite at the Galesburg Public Library in Galesburg**



This Month at RAILS – October 2025

THE TOP THREE

In response to board member feedback, each month we provide brief talking points to help you spread the word about specific RAILS programs/services. Here are this month's top three:

Over 190 Attendees at 2025 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium

For the third year in a row, RAILS co-hosted the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium. This event is a collaboration between RAILS, IHLS, AISLE, and ILA. The goal is to help school library workers get free training online. There were 15 sessions, over 20 presenters, and 194 attendees. We've received excellent feedback from attendees including:

- *"I just wanted to thank you for yesterday's conference. It was really wonderful. I appreciate the time that went into organizing that."*
- *"The format of this day was awesome! Free & virtual meant that my district was much more likely to approve me to take the personal day."*
- *"I think you all did a wonderful job putting this together! I learned a lot and enjoyed many of the topics and speakers! You are appreciated! Can't wait until next year!"*

2025-2026 Illinois School Library Census

RAILS is asking school libraries to participate in the [SLATE 2025-2026 Illinois School Library Census](#)! Participating in the census is essential to:

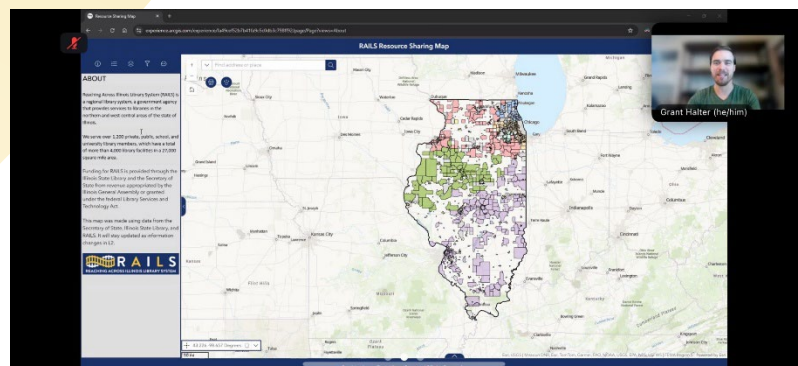
- school library advocacy
- school library equity
- professional development
- improving licensure access

Any library educator managing a school library can participate. School library licensure is not required.



RAILS Showcase: Resource Sharing Map, 9/24

On Monday, September 24, RAILS hosted a showcase event featuring the new resource sharing map. RAILS Data Analysis Manager Grant Halter (screenshot, right) gave a presentation of the new map and answered questions from attendees. 69 people participated. This event was recorded.



Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

New! Civic Empowerment Networking Group

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva began working with a new networking group, Civic Empowerment. The group is intended for library programmers who are looking to create stronger civic engagement in their communities. The group is planning a kickoff event for later in October.

Networking Group Cleanup Project

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva has been working with the RAILS Admin team to perform a cleanup of the networking group list. The team is reaching out to networking group conveners to update their listing in our directory. The groups are also being encouraged to add their events to the L2 calendar and share news in the *RAILS E-News*.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our September social media engagement efforts.

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

RAILS members can find information, trial access and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the [RAILS Deals & Discounts page](#).

Group Purchases

In September, the RAILS Deals & Discount team focused on developing infrastructure and communications for the upcoming November 1 and January 1 renewal cycles, which include Gale Presents Udemy, Comics Plus, Book Browse, JSTOR, Swank for Public libraries and Swank for K-12 libraries. New deals for Blinkist and Swank public library streaming were rolled out this month.

Vendor Webinars: Comics Plus for K–12 Libraries: Level Up Literacy

Tuesday, September 16

16 registered, 7 attended live

LibraryPass representatives demonstrated curated recommendations from the Comics Plus school library experts and shared success stories from some of our existing partners. The webinar was recorded and provided to all registrants after the event.

Online High School Programs

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

Career Online High School Stats as of September 30, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
515	272	75	63%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of September 30, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
58	22	34	92%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

The Find More Illinois team met with Auto-Graphics on September 5 to discuss patron authentication methods that are compatible with I-Share. On September 10, they met to evaluate outstanding help-desk tickets and discuss other issues related to FMI's use of the SHAREit software.

**Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of September 30, 2025**

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
3	71	11	1	86

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
September 2025	1,371
Fiscal Year to Date	4,456

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
September 2025	8,567,669

Find More Illinois Demos/Reviews

Date of Training	Library	Number of Participants
September 11	North Central College	3
September 26	PrairieCat Users Group Day	21

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

In early October, Baker & Taylor let go of over 500 employees and began the process of winding down operations with the intent of closing by the end of the year. RAILS acknowledges the far-reaching loss of a library industry leader and wish our colleagues at Baker & Taylor all the best.



We recognize the impact that this will have on our eRead Illinois members who utilize the Boundless platform by Baker & Taylor. RAILS is committed to continuing to offer a high-quality e-book and audiobook collection for libraries across Illinois. Currently, the Boundless platform remains intact, although we are not able to purchase additional content. We have been communicating with e-book and audiobook vendors, to explore best options for transitioning the eRead Illinois shared collection to an alternative platform in the coming weeks. Any necessary updates will be communicated through RAILS channels.

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
September 2025	24,086	22,551	46,637
Fiscal Year to Date	58,667	62,949	121,616

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
September 2025	2,208
Fiscal Year to Date	5,249

Explore More Illinois Update

In September 2025, 3,099 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in September 2025 were:

- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (303)
- Cantigny in Wheaton (227)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (108)
- Chicago Children's Museum (36)
- DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (33)



The most popular Chicago attractions in September 2025 were:

- Art Institute of Chicago (522)
- Brookfield Zoo Chicago (500)
- Field Museum (251)

- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (194)
- Chicago Academy of Sciences Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (153)

The dip in total reservations compared to last month is due to the closure of summer attractions and children returning to school, but September reservations in 2025 are higher than in previous years.

The number of attractions in Explore More Illinois has decreased this month due to the closure of seasonal attractions: Galesburg's Lake Storey, Galesburg's Lakeside Water Park, Glencoe Beach, and Fabyan Villa and Japanese Garden in Geneva.

New Special Projects Librarian Announced

We are delighted to announce that Gates Marquez started his new role as a RAILS Special Projects Librarian on October 1. Gates will manage the growing Explore More Illinois program, as well as special projects. Gates has over 8 years of experience leading and supporting strategic initiatives in public library and research support roles.

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

System	Publics	Community Colleges	Total
RAILS	350	3	353
IHLS	109	1	110
CPL	1	n/a	1
Totals	460	4	464

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of October 1, 2025

Attractions	65
Total Attractions in 2025	78

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in September 2025

Organization	September 2025
RAILS/IHLS	931
CPL	2,168
Total	3,099

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

September CE Highlights

The CE Team hosted two very packed, in-person events in September. David Vinjamuri, nationally recognized space use expert, and architect Joe Huberty, led a full-day workshop on redesigning spaces on a budget. From an attendee: “It was a very informative event presented by a very credible speaker. I left with actionable items that I could implement the next day, which I appreciated. It did not present too high in the sky of goals and made me feel confident leaving that I could make an attainable change.”

At a second in-person event, attendees got a hands-on look at the Alsip-Merrionette Park Public Library District's Library of Things collection, exploring how items are processed, packaged, labeled, stored, and displayed. They reviewed staff templates and guides for managing the collection and discussed which items have been hits and misses with patrons. A lively discussion and a tour of the newly renovated library were also included.

Recent CE Events

- **“Building Stronger Generational Teams,”** webinar, September 18
- **“Up or Out: Getting Employees Back on Track,”** webinar, September 24
- **“Trustee Training: Robert’s Rules of Order,”** webinar, September 27
- **“Illinois Notary Public Best Practices,”** webinar, October 1
- **“RAILS Learning Lab: Training Patrons to Be Digitally Resilient,”** online meeting, October 10

Upcoming CE Events

- **“Effectively Evaluating and Sharing Library Accessibility,”** webinar, October 21
Learn the importance of sharing information about accessibility in your library and best practices for describing it in a user-friendly manner. Learn how to simplify the process of evaluating the accessibility of your library using a checklist developed by the presenter.
- **“Calling It Quits: How to Evaluate Library Services and Decide What to Stop Doing,”** webinar, November 5
This session introduces a practical model for helping library leaders realign services with current priorities, staffing, and resources. The model includes a rubric for evaluating services, a checklist for sunseting offerings, and a template for clarifying ongoing services. Participants will apply the model to assess the sustainability of their own library’s services, with discussion on adapting it across library types and sizes. Change management strategies that support staff through transition are also emphasized.
- **“Narcan Administration: Spotting the Signs and Responding with Confidence,”** webinar, November 13
Beginning January 2026, Public Act 104-0056 requires local public libraries to maintain a supply of approved opioid antagonists for use in assisting individuals experiencing an opioid overdose. In this workshop, Live4Lali will provide training to help you recognize the signs of an opioid overdose and confidently administer Narcan (naloxone) to reverse it.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

October Partnership Meeting

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

October meeting topics included:

- School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) update
- AISLE & ILA Annual Conference updates
- Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) update
- Collaboration at the 2025 Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) conference
- ILA Legislative Meetups

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

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Joe Filapek Keynotes at PrairieCat Users Group Day

Joe Filapek presented two sessions at the annual PrairieCat Users Group Day in East Moline on September 26. His keynote session covered updates on the current IMLS situation, recent Illinois library legislation, and news from RAILS. In addition, Joe led a session focused on strategies for strengthening library boards and enhancing their effectiveness.

Jessica Silva Presents at the PrairieCat Back to School Event

On Tuesday, September 9, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva presented at the PrairieCat Back to School event. This Zoom event is intended to offer school librarians refreshers on PrairieCat procedures and processes. Jessica spoke on RAILS services for school libraries. 12 people attended.

Diana Rusch on ILA Reporter Advisory Committee & ALA Awards Committee

Diana Rusch recently started her three-year term on the ILA Reporter Advisory Committee, which works with the ILA Executive Director to help ensure quality content in the *ILA Reporter* and to assist in obtaining that content. She has also started her role with the ALA Awards Committee to help coordinate the general ALA Awards Program.

RAILS IT Update

In September, the RAILS IT team successfully completed the Burr Ridge datacenter internet migration. The team also installed a keyless entry system at the Rockford Service Center. This saved RAILS \$5,000. The team also ordered new staff laptops. The winning came in \$20,000 under budget.

SEPTEMBER 2025

RAILS
DIGITAL MARKETING
BOARD REPORT



FOLLOWERS

total subscribers

Facebook +14

2,792

Instagram +7

1,689

LinkedIn +31

2,165

REACH

accounts shown our content

Facebook +96

5,325

Instagram +162

1,145

LinkedIn +1,259

3,483

VIEWS

times our content was seen

Facebook +1,819

24,159

Instagram +1,865

12,071

LinkedIn +3,547

8,558

ENGAGEMENT

reactions, comments, and shares

Facebook -22

750

Instagram -112

272

LinkedIn +117

305

TOP POST

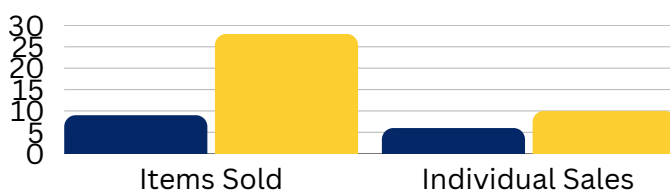
received the most engagement



RAILS Online Store

● August 2025

● September 2025



RAILS Minute Views: 665



Can't Shelve This Listens: 1,261

Consortial Reports

October 20, 2025

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

CARLI Governance Board

The CARLI Annual Meeting will be October 21, 2025, in Champaign. CARLI holds an Annual Directors Meeting on the same date.

I-Share

The Field Museum of Natural History was approved as a new I-Share participant with an implementation for a go-live date in June 2026 along with the Chicago History Museum.

CARLI has been working with RAILS staff to assist in implementing Find More Illinois for South Suburban College (both borrowing and lending). Additionally, Northern Illinois University has joined the University of Illinois Chicago as a Find More Illinois lender only.

Staff

The search for CARLI's new Senior Director is underway.

Continuing Education

CARLI continues to sponsor continuing education programs offered both to its members and to those in the Professional Development Alliance as well as other Illinois libraries.

EResources

CARLI has joined the Library Accessibility Alliance, a collaborative effort that promotes equitable access to library services and electronic resources.

Other

CARLI staff has been working with the [Education Justice Project](#) to promote their Reentry Guides. CARLI has had these titles cataloged by the Catalog Maintenance Center and is working with the EJP to have those available via their website.

There will be a webinar on November 3, 2025. [Registration is available.](#)

Program description: The Reentry Resource Program at the Education Justice Project (EJP) publishes practical guides for people returning home from prison and for those being deported from the US. These roughly [200-page guides](#), published in English and Spanish, offer empowering information and resources for individuals going through often-traumatic transitions. Lee Ragsdale will discuss the resources, how to access them, anticipated updates, and more. In addition, Lee will talk about EJP's Reentry Guide Project through which the

organization provides a year of technical and financial assistance to organizations to create their own reentry guides. Those already published through this project can be found [here](#).

CARLI is moving from RT to TeamDynamix (TDX) for its email support ticketing system. This transition will happen in February 2026.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

New Staff Member: Manager of Analytics and Technology

Molly Sum started with CCS in August. She has a background in software product management and analytics and will be leading the CCS implementation of OrangeBoy's Savannah for our central team site. Molly will also be collaborating with the Executive Director and CCS staff to provide updated analytics to the Governing Board for monthly and annual reports, project analysis, and more.

She has already been in touch with colleagues at RAILS and other agencies and we appreciate the support as she adjusts to the library industry.

Savannah Implementation

Molly Sum and Bob Barth have been working with the Orange Boy team on initial implementation of Savannah. The Polaris connection is now live and collecting data. Molly has collected initial responses from members for a data inventory to inform the larger implementation plan.

Discovery Interface Selected

At their September meeting, the CCS Governing Board selected Bibliocore as our discovery interface. The contract was completed on September 30 and implementation will begin soon. Mikeo Fujiura-Landers will lead implementation for CCS and will attend BiblioCon in Ontario this month to begin building relationships with the Bibliocommons team and the customer base.

Polaris Contract Renewal

With the new discovery layer selected, CCS can now continue with contract negotiations with Innovative for our Polaris renewal. Our existing contract expires at the end of April 2026.

Vernon Area Public Library Addition

Vernon Area Public Library began circulating on Polaris in September. Post-go-live training on Simply Reports and additional data work will continue. CCS has partnered with the Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) for assistance with bibliographic record deduplication. Five CMC staff will be deduplicating one day per week in addition to CCS and member library staff. We anticipate this will reduce the long tail of duplicate records that persist after the automated processes are completed.

Potential New Members

In October 2025, CCS Executive Committee will vote to recommend Wauconda and Rolling Meadows libraries as new CCS members. The Governing Board will vote at their November meeting. We anticipate a positive outcome and have begun planning for their additions. CCS expects a go-live in Fall 2026.

Find More Illinois Analysis

The CCS Governing Board will discuss Find More Illinois at the November and February meetings and will decide whether to continue consortium-wide membership for FY27. Leila Heath, RAILS, will attend the November meeting to share Find More Illinois progress and strategy with the Board.

Technology Infrastructure Changes In Process

CCS will be transitioning from our physical phone server and analog phone lines for patron notices to a cloud-based service. Once the transition is complete, we will decommission that server and our dedicated fiber circuit in favor of shared business fiber for our main office. This will result in a significant cost savings that reflects our reduced need based our remaining local server and hybrid workplace. This work should be complete by early Spring 2026.

Enhanced Notice Options Coming

CCS will begin implementation of LX Starter, an email notice service included with our Polaris subscription. These enhanced notices allow more customization to the look and feel of notices which will be more reflective of patron expectations regarding email communication. Member library staff will also be able to customize notices without CCS intervention allowing them to quickly update messaging to patrons. We will offer members opt-in windows in 2026.

Website Accessibility Audit

Website accessibility remediation will begin in November with the goal of completion by April 2026. While the CCS website is intended for library staff rather than the general public, we're committed to presenting accessible experiences to our members. As we implement BiblioCore, accessibility will be a key concern.

Annual Report and Audit

CCS staff are working on our annual report and supporting our external financial audit. Both documents should be presented to the Governing Board in November.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

New Website

Pinnacle's new website is live! The updated site addresses many of the concerns identified during the strategic planning process, including limited awareness of available resources and difficulties accessing the staff intranet. This new interface combines the public website and the private intranet into a single, unified platform with certain pages remaining password-protected.

Polaris Upgrade

In September, we successfully upgraded to Polaris 7.8. The upgrade was performed off-hours and went very smoothly. This version focuses on transitioning System Administration and some remaining Technical Services functions onto the web. Clarivate is continuing their push to get customers away from the legacy Windows Client and onto their web-based services.

Enriched Data Provider in PowerPAC

In what now seems like very good timing, we changed our catalog's cover image source away from Baker & Taylor's ContentCafe to Syndetics Unbound. As we continue to move closer to Vega Discover, this was a change that was going to need to happen anyway, so making the switch now is one less migration task when that time comes.

PrairieCat

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

Governance

- The first draft FY2 budget was presented and reviewed by the PrairieCat Finance Committee at their September meeting.
- A new mobile app contract was approved in April. Go-live of our new Vega Mobile app was on Oct. 2 and libraries are busy downloading and testing. Some are opening the app up for patrons.
- A new succession plan for the Director was approved by the Administrative Council on 10/3. Transition planning for the staff is underway.
- An in-person staff meeting for all PrairieCat staff will be held on 10/8. Transition planning will be a central part of our discussions.
- PrairieCat met with representatives from the newly formed Wallace Township Library to discuss their needs and help with their questions regarding library service in Illinois.

Member Services and UX

- PrairieCat hosted a successful in-person PUG Day event with 260 attendees with representation from more than 60 member libraries. PrairieCat offered 28 sessions during this event and received positive feedback from event surveys.
- PrairieCat staff continued to work with the 71 participating libraries and Innovative for a successful launch of the new Vega Mobile app on 10/2. Staff provided support resources, consultation and testing, marketing materials, training guides, and 5 live training sessions to help support the implementation of the new app. Staff will continue to provide support and training for the Vega Mobile app, which allows for extensive library customizations.
- PrairieCat hosted our annual Back to School session for school member libraries. This virtual event allows school library staff to reconnect with PrairieCat at the start of the school.
- PrairieCat staff continue to actively participate in the IUG and WILIUG organizations by attending meetings and serving on committees to advocate for enhancements that will benefit the PrairieCat members.

IT/Systems

- The IT/Systems department is currently working on documenting all procedures in anticipation of starting cross-training. This is part of our ongoing transition planning process, which all PrairieCat is undertaking currently.
- We have purchased our new staff laptops and have been gathering new software required for staff before starting setup.

- We have successfully tested the automated restoration from our redundant backup system.
- We have completed the fall student and staff patron loads for several PrairieCat school members.
- Systems is currently assisting with the rollout of our Solus app.
- We have started our annual IP verification and firewall cleanup project.
- Systems resolved 119 helpdesk tickets for member libraries.
- PrairieCat resolved 990 tickets in the last quarter.

Library Services

Over the past quarter, the Library Services team has 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.

Training and Presentations

- 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.
- Library site visits were conducted to support members with specific projects and to provide clarification on circulation and technical services policies.
- Several courses offered through TalentLMS have been revised to improve content and relevance.

Two Excellent Presentations were delivered at PUG Day

1. Streamlining Physical Processing and Cataloging Workflow -- **Sandy Tedder**
 2. Excel Tips for Patron and Item Data -- **Melissa Landis**
- Melissa Landis is preparing a 90-minute presentation for the ILA Pre-conference in Rosemont, Illinois.
 - Planning and development for the MARC Cataloging Course, scheduled for January, are currently underway.

Database Maintenance and Cleanups

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.

Database Standardization

We are currently evaluating Mitinet as a potential replacement for MARCive to improve our database record updates and maintain consistent standardization. Three of us are actively exploring BEST MARC, a product offered by Mitinet. We will continue to share updates on our progress.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

RRLC report from September 2025 meeting

Discussion focused on how schools manage overdue notices and unreturned library materials at the end of the school year. Practices vary:

- Some schools carry fines over from year to year.
- Others transfer fines to the business office for accounting and waive them, as they are added to student accounts at the district level.

Preparation for upgrading to version 5.8 was discussed.

Concerns were raised about catalog maintenance, including:

- Creation of multiple records for the same book copy.
- Best practices for creating on-the-fly records.
- General cataloguing standards.

RRLC will be hiring Mitinet to clean up the current catalog. Further discussion highlighted the need for a cataloguing training manual to ensure consistency across libraries and among librarians.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

Staff Independence Update

The IRS has issued RSA a new EIN. That allowed us to start moving forward again towards our goal start date of direct staff employment on 1 Jan 2026.

- We've updated LIMRiCC and started the onboarding process for our health and unemployment insurance.
- We were accepted by IMRF as full members at their last meeting in September! We can't finish the setup work until 1 Jan at the earliest.
- We've already got Mission Square set up and are ready to go there.
- We've applied with the State of IL to pay taxes for employees and for the tax-free certificate.
- We've started setting up work on Paylocity for our payroll.
- All other benefits setup work is coming along nicely.

We still await the outcome of the HR Source review of our new job descriptions and pay scale. We'll deal with, and make modifications to things as we see fit, from their suggestions when we get them.

We've procured Microsoft O365. They needed an EIN to do that. We expect to be ready to fully cutover from RAILS' O365 system at the end of December. Best to separate on our start date for FOIA requests and to help our members understand that we're no longer RAILS employees.

The RSA Board approved our new Employee Handbook. Internally, we're creating or tweaking other personnel policies with an eye on improving our focus on being a direct support organization. RSA will have at least 25% new staff starting in January. That means we must do a lot of groundwork for training and orientation purposes. We've taken this opportunity to go back and reworked all internal guidance

and standards to refocus on servicing our members. Everything from documentation, training, visits, and how and where staff work is being tweaked.

We've just advertised our Bibliographic Services Specialist and Library Systems & Data Analyst positions. In November we'll post our Business & Marketing Coordinator position. Interviews should be starting in mid to late November.

Other Updates

Starting in July, running through December 2026 we've focused our efforts on in-person library visits to each member and branch library in RSA. We expect to continue this 18-month visit cadence into the foreseeable future. The Library Services and Bibliographic Services departments are splitting the visits 50-50. Between the past year's parameter party in-person or virtual visits, and these scheduled visits, we hope to get our membership fully back on track post COVID changes, to impart knowledge on various topics, do some cleanup for our members, and to reset our relationship with our members. No visits for several years has led to some less-than-ideal trends. Mostly things that could have been easily remediated with a quick conversation about the best way to do things in the system. Also that we exist to help our members and they should call us with issues. We saw the same types of issues and trends happen in 2005 and 2010-2011 timeframes where we weren't visiting libraries.

One of our three catalogers has retired. For now, we've spread out the work to the remaining two catalogers and lowered or suspended some less critical tasks. The Bibliographic Services Specialist position will not be doing original cataloging or solo site visits. We hope to train and promote whoever we hire by the end of 2026.

Both Hamilton PL and Camp Point PL, our newest members, have had their local catalog training and are starting to add their collections in RSA. For almost all new RSA members we find it's quicker and less work to manually copy catalog their collection than to import their records. Our experience with record imports is that we get about a 30% match rate, leaving the library to track down 70% of their collection to move to an RSA record. In the meantime, their patrons experience a holds experience that is quite poor because the majority of their library's items are on temp records, not the RSA-wide record with all the items.

We recently rolled out BLUEcloud Circulation for a beta testing group of 2 public and 1 school libraries. This is the SirsiDynix online Circulation module. We're working with SirsiDynix to fix whatever issues are fixable via configuration changes and getting ready to roll out the testing to 2 or 3 smaller public libraries and 2 or 3 more schools.

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Annual event SWAN Expo

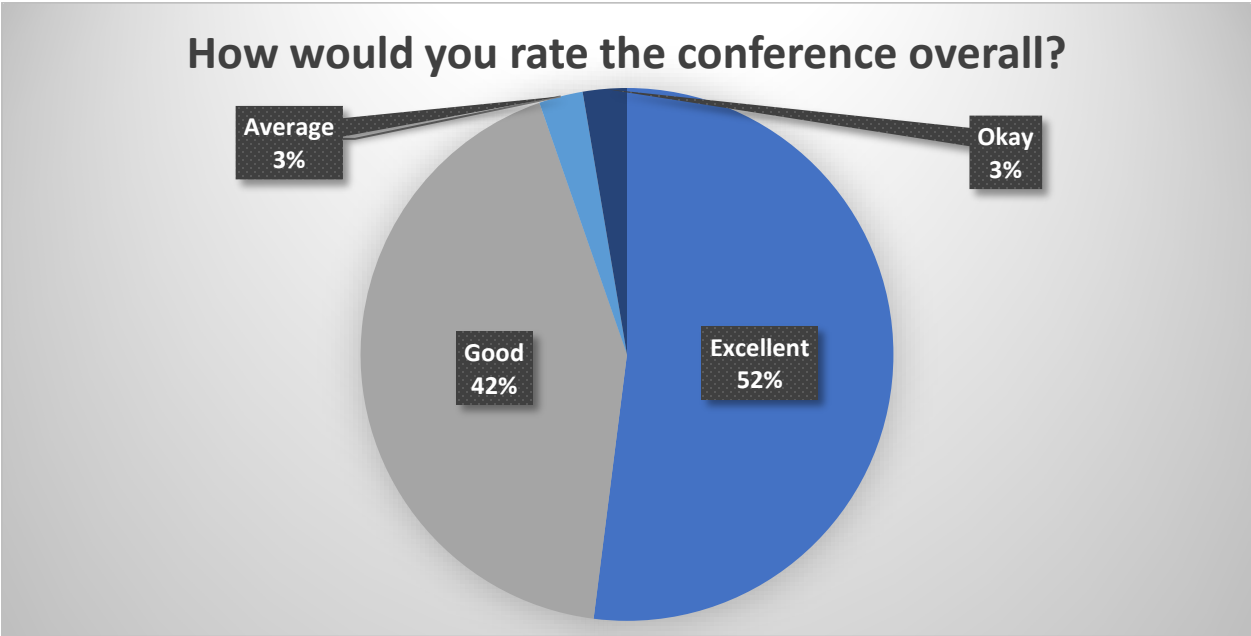
The annual event held on August 22, 2025, concluded with 18 sessions and a majority rating of “excellent.” The attendance dropped slightly from the year prior, but notably there were very few no shows.

Expo year	Attendees	Libraries
2023	213	54
2024	227	53
2025	208	54

Selected attendee feedback from the post event survey included the following comments:

“This was my first SWAN Expo. I liked networking between the sessions. I liked hearing the keynote speaker and the CPL session the most. It felt good being reminded how great is the library system we enjoy and contribute to. The conference helped me develop a deeper appreciation for SWAN.”

“I thought John’s Chrastka’s presentation was really exceptional. It was good hear from someone who was out there fighting for libraries in the climate right now. On the whole, great Expo this year. I took something valuable away from each session I attended.”



SWAN in-service day

We are conducting an in-service day on October 24, 2025 as part of the initial phase of creating SWAN's next strategic plan.

Aspen Library Software Foundation Board Seated

The Aspen community selected its first 7-member governing board. The board will oversee the application to join the Open Library Foundation, as well as the appointment of several standing and ad-hoc committees to work out its software development and communications platforms.

2026 SWAN Events now in L2

The 50 events for the upcoming year are now posted in L2 for member libraries. We tag all SWAN events in a given year with "swan2026" in L2 so that all they can be found using a [simple keyword search](#). We are also planning workshops and special events for 2026 as well.