
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, November 21, 2025 | 1:00 PM
Galesburg Public Library
264 West Main Street, Galesburg, IL 60527

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order
Gwen Gregory, RAILS President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on Friday, November 21, 2025, at the Galesburg Public Library.
2. Roll Call of Members
Palmisano called the roll of the Board members.
Galesburg Public Library: Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Yolande Wilburn
RAILS Burr Ridge: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Catherine Yanikoski.
Zoom: Jennifer Hovanec
Absent: None
3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements
Guests at Galesburg Public Library: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Alice Grabowski, Ryan Hebel, Kate Niehoff, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Sharon Swanson
Guests at Burr Ridge: Dan Bostrom, Leila Heath, Laura Nemeth, Anne Slaughter
Guests on Zoom: Carolyn Ciesla, Sam Daly, Mark Hatch, Mandy Saia, Kendal Orrison, Diana Rusch, Margae Schmidt, Liz Toft
4. Public comments
There were no public comments.
5. Consent agenda
 - 5.1. Adoption of the Agenda
 - 5.2. RAILS Board Minutes of October 24, 2025, Regular Meeting
 - 5.3. Approval of Disbursements: October 2025
Gregory announced that, to accommodate guest Carolyn Ciesla, we will move agenda item "9.1 Board Development" to directly follow the regular Illinois State Library report, agenda item 7.4.
Parks moved to approve the consent agenda with the changes stated. Gove seconded, and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jean Carroll, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily

Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Yolande Wilburn, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported that general fund revenues through October were \$10K above budget, primarily due to the earlier-than-anticipated receipt of the first of two payments for our Annual Per Capita grant for FY2026. Some of the above budget revenues were from the EBSCO group purchase, which exceeded expectations, and from the sale of three decommissioned delivery fleet vehicles. Investment income of \$382K through October was \$89K above budget. Interest rates were budgeted at a blended rate of 3.50% to allow for multiple anticipated interest rate cuts over the course of FY2026. General fund expenditures were \$355K below budget, primarily due to below-budget personnel costs, contractual services, supplies, travel, continuing education, and vehicle expenses. The above budget equipment rental, repair, maintenance, and buildings and grounds partially offset these. Through October, personnel, cataloging consulting, L2 enhancement costs, and administrative overhead have been recorded for the L2 Development, World Language Cataloging Services, and Cook County Digital Equity grants within the Special Revenue fund. Also in October, additional components for the key fob systems were purchased for the Coal Valley and Rockford facilities.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

Gregory thanked the Galesburg Public Library for giving a building tour and hosting the RAILS Board today.

7.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports

There were no additional comments or questions.

7.3. RAILS Reports

7.3.1. RAILS Monthly Report

Harris also thanked the Galesburg Public Library for hosting the RAILS Board and for giving tours of the new building. Highlights from the monthly report included an update on the November 14 end of the 43-day federal government shutdown, and the announcement that the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) will resume administering state library grants. In addition to the legislative agenda, the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee (PPC) met on November 3 to discuss forming a study group on Personal Property Replacement Tax disbursements and another on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Harris congratulated Leila Heath and Anna Behm on their incredibly fast work in

transferring the eRead Illinois platform from Baker & Taylor's Boundless to Lyris' The Palace Project. Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek attended a press conference in Chicago on November 5 with Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias. The press conference was held to announce the new funding formula for the Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Aid grants. The new formula will help close to forty RAILS members. Lastly, Harris discussed the opportunity to speak on a panel at the Public Library Association's (PLA) Leadership Academy on November 5, alongside RAILS Board member Yolande Wilburn.

7.3.2. RAILS Service of the Month: RAILS Consulting & Continuing Education
Niehoff, Rusch, and Schmidt gave an overview of the RAILS Consulting & Continuing Education department. The department consults with library members on topics such as non-resident cards, training resources, and legal requirements. As well as on services such as the free FOIA/OMA Hotline, and the HR Source discounted membership. They organize a wide range of training for both internal RAILS staff and the RAILS membership. Programming ideas come from a mix of sources, including members, responses from Illinois and national library issues, and by networking with professional organizations. In 2024, the Illinois School Board of Education (ISBE) granted RAILS as a Professional Development Hour (PDH) credit provider to school library professionals. Niehoff announced a new training source to be unveiled in the Spring of 2026: a subscription to Niche Academy. Niche Academy is an online learning platform specifically for libraries. Every RAILS member will have access to the platform, and this will complement RAILS' in-person and online webinars. Additionally, the department collaborates with the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Heartland Library System on Director's University, a training program exclusively for Illinois library directors. Lastly, Niehoff reported on RAILS Catalyst, an eight-month leadership development program. Catalyst, in its inaugural year, is supported by RAILS and offered for free to all 48 participants.

7.4. Illinois State Library Report

Mandy Saia, from the Illinois State Library (ISL), reported that Laura Keyes has joined the state library as the State Data Coordinator. Staff at the state library are finalizing the School District Library Grants, which were due on October 15. Library systems will be notified of some applying schools that do not meet system membership requirements. Saia mentioned the new funding formula for the Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Aid grants, announced by the Secretary of State on November 5. ISL staff plan to visit Illinois libraries in person to see how the libraries are using grant funds. Effective January 1, 2026, under House Bill 2747/Senate Bill 1550, is the

legislation that allows the state to provide grants to public libraries to improve and enhance security. More information on this grant will be provided soon.

At this time, agenda item 9.1 was presented.

8. New Business

8.1. Compliance with Laws Update

Harris reviewed the memo from RAILS' legal partners at Ancel Glink, which summarizes various laws in effect that impact RAILS' day-to-day business. RAILS is required to review compliance with laws as part of reporting through the Annual Report to the Illinois State Library. Five updates were discussed.

8.2. RSA Intergovernmental Agreement

Filapek provided an update on the Resource Sharing Alliance's (RSA) operational independence. RSA is the remaining Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAP) and has support staff who are RAILS employees. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between RSA and RAILS is the next important step in RSA's transition to independence. The IGA formalizes the planned transition of RAILS staff currently assigned to RSA. Effective January 1, 2026, these staff members will become direct employees of RSA. Filapek explained that while RSA is taking on responsibility for its core operations and staffing, RAILS will continue to provide support through the LLSAP Support Grant program.

8.3. RAILS Closing for Staff In-Service

Harris requested approval to close RAILS on May 7, 2026, for the annual staff in-service day. The staff in-service day is a dedicated learning day for all staff. We are requesting approval to close on that day, with no materials to be delivered.

Kowalcze moved to approve the closing of RAILS Services and Delivery on May 7, 2026, for the annual staff in-service day. Willburn seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.4. New Member Application

Bostrom gave an overview of Hill Correction Center in Galesburg, IL. The correction center library serves 1,500 inmates and also includes a law library. The library is interested in both RAILS grants and services.

Parks moved to accept Hill Correction Center to full membership in RAILS, with final approval requested from the Illinois State Library. Gove seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.5. Request for Funds Transfer

Harris and Filapek gave an overview of the RAILS Capital Fund. The fund, established in 2014, has been used over time to support essential projects and to replace equipment. As a result, the Capital Projects Fund's current balance has been drawn down. Considering project needs over the next several years, this current balance is insufficient to meet the anticipated replacement of high-mileage delivery vehicles and capital expenditures. Filapek discussed the capital needs assessment conducted by Building Technology Consultants, Inc. It is requested that the Board approve a \$1.85M transfer from the Unassigned General Fund to the Capital Projects Fund to cover anticipated capital needs through fiscal year 2028. Money remaining in the Unassigned General Fund is sufficient to fund approximately 18 months of operations, which has generally been the threshold the Board has tried to maintain. Harris noted that, moving forward, there will be board-level discussions on financial planning related to capital projects.

Wilburn moved to approve the funds transfer. Kowalcze seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Jean Carroll, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Yolande Wilburn, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

8.6. Adoption of the Free Speech Needs Free Libraries: Joint Statement

The RAILS Advocacy Committee, which met on November 13, discussed its desire to bring the *"Free Speech Needs Free Libraries: A joint Statement of CARLI, Orbis Cascade Alliance, and PALCI"* to the full RAILS Board for consideration of adoption. Harris explained that Anne Craig, CARLI Senior Director, collaborated to draft this creative comment attribution statement. The statement was developed in response to growing threats to academic freedom and freedom of inquiry experienced by library users in many states.

Sennett moved to adopt the *"Free Speech Needs Free Libraries: A joint Statement of CARLI, Orbis Cascade Alliance, and PALCI"* and to add RAILS support. Voitik seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

9. Board Development

9.1. Overview of Academic Libraries

Carolyn Ciesla, library director at Elmhurst University's AC Buehler Library and President of the Illinois Library Association, attended the meeting and gave an overview of academic libraries. Academic libraries are not a revenue generator for a university, making advocating for the library extremely important. An academic library not only provides students and faculty with books and other materials but also with databases, research resources, and group study spaces. Additionally, academic libraries provide

interlibrary loan service, computer labs, research support, and open educational resources to the university. Ciesla shared that, in 2021, to promote open educational resources, her library began offering a \$500 grant to faculty members who replace a book with an online resource. The AC Buehler Library supports students with mental health, housing, and food insecurities by creating a local and Chicagoland resource guide. Ciesla discussed the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) and how it supports academic libraries in Illinois. Two organizations that support academic library directors and, according to Ciesla, are a lifeline are LIBRAS, Inc., a consortium of private and university libraries, and the Network of Illinois Learning Resources in Community Colleges (NILRC). In closing, the top concerns for academic libraries are the rising cost of materials, artificial intelligence, campus space, and predatory publishing for faculty members.

10. RAILS Board Member Reports

Gregory reported on the upcoming retirement of Anne Craig, Senior Director of CARLI, and her replacement, Laurie Blandino, effective December 8.

Caldicott mentioned that the Learning Technology Center, a statewide program that supports public schools through technology initiatives, has found that the free EBSCO database funded by the Illinois State Library is not compliant with Illinois law. The hope is that this issue is resolved soon. Harris will reach out to the Illinois State Library for feedback on this issue.

Sennett mentioned that the Village of Wilmette met on November 12 and passed an ordinance regarding civil immigration enforcement. In part, the ordinance states that an immigrant, documented or not, should be treated with respect and dignity, which aligns with the village's public policy. Similarly, the Wilmette Public Library District passed a resolution that the library is a welcoming, safe place for all who visit, attend programming, and access its services, free from threats from immigration enforcement. The ordinance and the resolution were in response to Operation Midway Blitz and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operation targeting undocumented immigrants. Sennett also shared that the library became a drop-off food site for a township food pantry when the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits temporarily ended.

Parks announced that the Peoria Public Library finalized its three-year strategic plan and successfully completed negotiations on a union contract.

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11. Meeting recap and agenda building: RAILS Board meeting Friday, January 23, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

The next RAILS Board meeting will be on Friday, January 23, 2026. There is no RAILS Board meeting scheduled for December. Included on the January agenda will be an LLSAP Services overview with Anne Slaughter, and guest Heather Kotula will present on special libraries. Also on the agenda will be a closed session for the six-month review of closed session minutes.

12. Adjourn

Gregory adjourned the meeting at 2:37 pm.