

Reaching Across Illinois Library System Board Meeting

Friday, January 23, 2026 | 1:00 PM
RAILS Burr Ridge
125 Tower Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Gwen Gregory, RAILS President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on Friday, January 23, 2026, at 1:00 pm, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.

2. Roll Call of Members

RAILS Burr Ridge: Jean Carroll, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Amanda Kowalcze, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski

RAILS East Peoria: Ron Holohan, Roberta Parks

Zoom: Jennifer Hovanec, Emily Porter

Absent: Monica Caldicott, Yolande Wilburn

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests at Burr Ridge: Anna Behm, Dan Bostrom, Monica Harris, Leila Heath, Galin Ilieve, Joe Filapek, Laura Nemeth, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Anne Slaughter

Guests on Zoom: Sam Daly, Ryan Hebel, Heather Kotula, Kate Niehoff, Jessica Silva, 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 November 21, 2025, Regular Meeting

5.3. Approval of Disbursements: November and December

Parks moved to approve the consent agenda. 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

6. RAILS Single Audit

Swanson reported that the RAILS Single Audit was finalized with a clean opinion from the auditors. The single audit examines our compliance with federal guidelines governing the accounting and stewardship of federal funds received through our Area and Per Capita (APC) grant. The Office of Management and Budget delayed issuing the final single audit guidance that governs these reports until the beginning of December.

Kowalcze motioned to accept the FY2025 RAILS Single Audit. Yanikoski 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

7. RAILS Financial Report

Both the November and December 2025 financials were included in the packet, but Swanson focused on reporting the December financials at the meeting. Through December, General fund revenues and expenditures were both above budget. The December 31, 2025, unassigned General fund (\$28.5 million) cash and investment balances would fund an estimated 24.2 months of budgeted FY2026 operations. General fund revenues through December were above budget, primarily due to greater-than-anticipated participation in the EBSCO group purchase and higher-than-anticipated investment income. The above budget for other revenues was primarily from the sale of eight decommissioned fleet vehicles. In December, RAILS purchased five CDs at an average rate of 3.53%. These CDs replaced the five CDs that had matured earlier in calendar year 2025. General fund expenditures through December were above budget primarily due to the \$1,850,000 transfer from the General fund to the Capital Projects fund (approved by the Board on November 21, 2025), as well as above-budget contractual services and library materials. This is partially offset by personnel, travel, continuing education, vehicle expenses, and professional services that are below budget. Swanson reported that health insurance costs increased higher than anticipated.

8. Reports

8.1. Report from the RAILS President

No report from President Gregory.

8.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports

8.2.1. Advocacy Committee

8.2.2. Consortia Committee

- 8.2.3. Executive Committee
- 8.2.4. Policy Committee
- 8.2.5. Resource Sharing Committee
- 8.2.6. Universal Service Committee

Nothing additional was added to the committee report document found in the packet.

9. RAILS Reports

9.1.1. RAILS Monthly Report

Harris shared that the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) met on Thursday, January 22. On the agenda was a discussion of the upcoming ISL survey, which will be sent to all library types in Illinois; the announcement of a new application for security grants; a review of progress on the Illinois Reliable Information System (IRIS), the statewide database; and school library grants. On December 3, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) announced that it was restoring all federal grants that had been terminated in the wake of the March 14 executive order. Harris announced that, along with RAILS Board member Emily Porter and Stephanie Nissen from Rockford University, they will all attend the American Library Association (ALA) National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC, February 25-26. Also discussed was one of the four approved legislative priorities from the Illinois Library Association, which has been moved to an official bill: House Bill 4261 (HB4261). If approved, it will increase the Library System Area & Per Capita Grants and Public Per Capita & School District Grants by 20%. Board members were invited to attend the upcoming RAILS Member Update on February 11. Harris congratulated Ola Gronski, Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist, on receiving the Best of Marketing Honorable Mention from the Library Marketing & Communications Group (LMCG) for her work on the podcast, *Can't Shelve This*. The podcast is a collaboration between RAILS and Illinois Heartland Library System.

9.1.2. RAILS Service of the Month: LLSAP Service

Slaughter outlined the Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAP) and the services RAILS provides. An LLSAP provides shared catalog software that enables libraries to seamlessly share their collections and patron data. LLSAPs are major drivers of resource sharing and essential partners in supporting the operations of RAILS member libraries. Over the years, the number of LLSAP programs has reduced to the six that cover the RAILS membership: Cooperative Computer Services (CCS), Pinnacle Library Cooperative, PrairieCat, Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA), Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC), and System Wide Automated Network

(SWAN). All six are independent organizations. As part of an ongoing partnership, RAILS monetarily supports LLSAPs in two ways: the annual LLSAP Support Grant and the Catalog Membership Grant.

10. Illinois State Library Report

Liz Toft, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Coordinator, reported that funding on the federal level is on track for FY2027. There were twenty-six applications received for the Live and Learn Construction Grants, and 92% of school districts applied for the School District Library Grant. Staff at the Illinois State Library will share the list of school districts found ineligible to apply for the grant this year with the systems. The deadline for Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Grants is January 30. As a recommendation from an efficiency study of the Secretary of State's office, a survey to all libraries statewide will be sent regarding the grants, services, and programs from the state library. The first round of surveys will be sent to academic and special libraries, followed by public libraries and schools.

11. New business

11.1. The Palace Project

Joe Filapek, Leila Heath, and Anna Behm reported on the status of the transition to The Palace Project for eRead Illinois. The collective efforts of the RAILS team, The Palace Project team, our many statewide library partner organizations, and individual member libraries across Illinois were essential to the success of this migration. Early usage reflects strong patron engagement, with more than 14,000 items checked out through The Palace Project in December. Heath stated that the complexity of K–12 institutions requires significantly greater development and customization. Development work specific to K–12 is the highest priority for The Palace Project team in early 2026, alongside temporary solutions to provide immediate access for many of our school libraries. To support faster onboarding, RAILS has established three collection instances within The Palace Project app—one each for elementary, middle, and high schools. At this time, all schools have some level of access to the eRead materials.

11.2. Strategic Plan 2027-2029

Harris provided a historical background on RAILS' strategic plans, beginning in 2014. The latest strategic plan was from 2022 through 2025. Consultant Cindy Fesemyer, who collaborated on the 2022 plan, has been hired to advise RAILS on a new plan that will start in 2027 and go through 2029. Harris is proposing a hybrid approach, maintaining the current mission statement and refreshing the vision statement, and keeping the overarching goals from the last plan while updating the objectives within each goal. A

steering committee of 12, including 2 board members, 4 staff members, and 6 representatives from different library types, will be formed soon, with the first meeting scheduled for February. In June, the Board will hold a three-hour strategic planning workshop. This will be a year-long project with ongoing monthly updates to the Board.

11.3. MOU for RSA Vehicle Transition

Filapek reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RAILS and the Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA) regarding the transfer of ownership of two vehicles. RAILS' attorney advised that this MOU be structured to comply with the Illinois Library System Act and the statutory conditions under which the board may authorize the transfer of ownership of system assets to another tax-supported library or library system. This proposed transfer, like the broader RSA independence project, is part of a deliberate and collaborative process between RAILS and RSA. It complements the Intergovernmental Agreement approved by the RAILS board in November and aligns with prior board actions supporting RSA's transition. Filapek reported that the MOU follows the approach used when PrairieCat became independent of RAILS.

Vancina motioned to adopt the Memorandum of Understanding for the RSA vehicle transition. Gove seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

11.4. New Member Application

Silva introduced two libraries requesting RAILS membership. The first is Lake Forest Academy in Lake Forest, IL. The boarding school serves 452 students, about half of whom live on campus, and students in grades 9-12. The second is Washington Central School District #51 in Washington, IL. The district serves 1,250 students and employs two librarians.

Voitik moved to accept Lake Forest Academy and Washington Central School District #51 to full membership in RAILS, with final approval requested from the Illinois State Library. Parks seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

At this time in the meeting, there was a ten-minute break (3:01 pm – 3:11 pm)

12. Board Development

12.1. Overview of Special Libraries

Dan Bostrom introduced speaker Heather Kotula, President and CEO of Access Innovations, Inc. Kotula is the current president of the Special Library Association (SLA) Illinois Chapter. Kotula reported that SLA recently announced a merger with the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T). This will result in a

combined association serving a diverse membership of information professionals across the academic, corporate, government, and nonprofit sectors. On June 6-9, ASIS&T will host the Information Science Summit & Special Libraries Conference in Albuquerque, NM. Kotula noted that if an organization conducts research and development, it most likely has a library. There are many challenges for special libraries, including funding, advocacy, and the need to be creative and innovative to attract patrons and raise awareness of the library. Lastly, Kotula discussed a project between Access Innovations, Inc. and Ingram Content Group focused on metadata searches.

13. RAILS Board Member Reports

Porter reported that a new staff member has been hired in the library at Rockford University following a period of understaffing.

14. Meeting recap and agenda building: RAILS board meeting Friday, February 27, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Friday, February 27, at 1:00 pm. The agenda for the February meeting will include the RAILS investment portfolio review; the Service of the Month will be Find More Illinois; and the Board Development topic will be library advocacy at the state and national levels, with guest Amelia Aldred.

15. Closed Session

Gregory stated that the Board will move into closed session to discuss matters pertaining to the following, as per 5 Illinois Compiled Statutes, chapter 120, paragraph 2, section 2 c(21), to discuss matters listed below:

Exceptions. A public body may hold closed meetings to consider the following subjects:

(21) Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06.

Carroll moved for the Board to move into closed session. Yanikoski 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none. The motion carried.

Gove motioned that the Board return to open session. Holohan 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none. The motion carried.

16. Actions in follow-up to closed session

16.1. Six-month Review of Closed Session Minutes

Yanikoski motioned to open the closed session minutes from August 25, 2023, January 26, 2024, March 22, 2024, June 20, 2025, and July 25, 2025. Kowalcze 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

Parks motioned to dispose of all closed session recordings from May 23, 2014, through May 24, 2024. Vancina seconded, and a roll call 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, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

17. Adjourn

Gregory adjourned the meeting at 3:52 pm.