



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

Executive Director Report, April 2026

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Federal Funding and IMLS Update

The American Library Association continues to denounce federal book banning legislation [HR 7661](#), which “threatens funding promised by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 from any school that develops, implements, facilitates, hosts or promotes any program or activity for, or provides or promotes literature or other materials to, children under the age of 18 that include “sexually oriented material” More on this, including a statement from American Library Association President Sam Helmick, can be found on the [ALA website](#).

The Trump Administration has again requested that Congress eliminate all federal funding for library services. Dear Appropriator letters in Congress and the Senate have now closed.

ALA is encouraging support for the [Right to Read Act](#), which would ensure access to an effective school library staffed by a certified school librarian. The bill would codify protections for librarians and educators.

On April 6, the US Court of Appeals granted an unopposed motion from the Trump Administration to drop the IMLS from its appeal, [permanently blocking the shutdown of several agencies including IMLS](#). The on April 9, DOJ lawyers executed a separate agreement to settle a parallel case from the American Library Association and AFSCME.

On April 7, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley introduced the [Books Save Lives Act of 2026](#) to promote inclusive literature, ensure an inclusive learning environment, and counteract the harm of book bans nationwide. The legislation would ensure primary and secondary schools have a library with a trained librarian, require a diverse collection of books, and classify book bans as violations of federal civil rights laws.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee (PPC) meeting as Ex Officio on Monday, April 6.

As you know, the ILA Executive Board has approved the following legislative priorities for this year:

- 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

Some new bills related to these priorities have begun to appear:

[HB4261](#) would increase annual grants for public libraries in the state, school library grants, and the library system grants in order to reflect inflationary pressures since the last time the grant amount was raised. The library system grant is

what funds operations at RAILS and the other two systems in Illinois. The bill, which was filed by Rep. Martha Deuter, has bipartisan support with nineteen additional cosponsors as of the time of this writing. If passed, this bill would be effective immediately. This bill passed the House 107-0 and now moves to the Senate.

[HB5236](#) (filed by Rep. Tracy Katz Muhl) would amend the Digital Library Protection Act to include more reasonable terms for libraries as it relates to eBook licenses. These provisions closely reflect those made in the [2025 legislation](#) passed in Connecticut. The bill now has thirty six (36) cosponsors and was passed by the House on April 17 99-0 with one present vote. This bill will now move to the Senate. There is more on the Advocacy efforts around eBooks later in this report.

ILA has published a [list of the bills](#) they are supporting, opposing, and monitoring on their website.

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

Accessibility and VPAT Repository

As of the time of this writing, the April 24 deadline libraries, school districts, and public academic institutions serving populations of 50,000 or more to meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards has been delayed by one year. I should have more to report on this change at our meeting on Friday.

RAILS is continuing to update resources to support member libraries in meeting these requirements through advocacy with vendors, maintaining a VPAT and Accessibility Statement repository, and linking to resources related to e-resource accessibility.

RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future

CCDNN Updates

In March, the Cook County Digital Navigator Network (CCDNN) team held four Libraries as Digital Navigators: Library Listening & Learning Circle events. These were held at the following locations:

- Orland Park Public Library, 3/11 - 33 registrants
- Oak Park Public Library, 3/12 - 23 registrants
- Arlington Heights Memorial Library, 3/18 - 24 registrants
- Virtual, 3/23 – 43 registrants

In these listening sessions, participants were put in small groups to discuss challenges, ideas, and what's working in terms of digital equity. These sessions gave library staff an opportunity to connect with colleagues and shape the next phase of the CCDNN program.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Public Library Association Conference in Minneapolis – April 1-3

I attended the Public Library Association conference in Minneapolis from April 1-3, alongside several members of the RAILS team. There was a lot of great learning and information relevant to public libraries and their partners. I really appreciated the opportunity to connect with members, vendors, and the ALA eBook group, who met to discuss legislation happening nationwide.

RSA Day Presentations on the Unserved

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek and I presented two sessions focused on the unserved at RSA Day on April 8 in Macomb. The sessions were adapted from the universal service presentation originally delivered at the ILA Annual Conference in October, tailored for the RSA audience.

Joe Filapek Participates in Casten Town Hall Event

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek participated in a roundtable discussion on April 3 at Acorn Public Library hosted by Congressman Sean Casten, bringing together representatives from libraries, museums, and historical societies. The conversation focused on key issues impacting these institutions, including reductions in federal IMLS funding and the essential role libraries and museums play in their communities.

The Librarians Screening in Rockford

On April 16, I had the opportunity to attend a screening of *The Librarians*, a 2025 documentary about book banning, and serve as a panelist alongside Dr. Emily Knox, BookRiot contributor Kelly Jensen, and Martha Hickson, a librarian featured in the film. The event, which was hosted by LIRE and the Rockford Public Library was well attended and a wonderful chance to talk about the intellectual freedom issues happening across the country. Thank you to RAILS Board member Emily Porter and co-founder Stephanie Nissen for inviting me to the event and to RAILS Board member Megan Gove for attending.

E-Book Advocacy Update

Throughout March and April, Leila Heath, Anna Behm, and myself attended daily meetings with folks from ILA, the ILA Public Policy Committee, and the ILA Advocacy Committee to discuss and plan action around supporting HB 5236: The Digital Library Protection Act. The RAILS team prepared a written FAQ document, assisted with advocacy reach-outs and amplified messaging from ILA to member libraries. I attended a hearing at the Consumer Protection Committee meeting in Springfield on March 24. The bill passed committee 6-3 on partisan lines.

An ILA Noon Network webinar, “Ready, Set, Advocate: eBook Legislation Update,” was held on March 26, to discuss the importance of this legislation, and how libraries and their patrons can advocate for the bill. I had the privilege of serving as the panel moderator. The group continues to meet weekly in April as the bill continues to progress.

The bill went back to the Consumer Protection committee on Tuesday, April 14, joined by Kyle Courtney, chief architect of this bill and copyright lawyer and librarian, as a witness. This time it passed out of committee 9-0. The bill passed on the House floor on April 17 99-0 with one voting present. On Friday, April 17 I spoke with the Chicago Tribune about an upcoming story about eBooks, libraries, and HB5236.

Looking Ahead to May

- **May Service of the Month and Board Development topics – Data Update with Grant Halter and Library Demographic Profile with Yolanda Everson**



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:

Introducing RAILS Academy

RAILS Academy is a new online learning platform designed to support the professional development of staff at RAILS member libraries. Powered by Niche Academy, RAILS Academy provides free, on-demand access to hundreds of tutorials on topics ranging from the ethics of artificial intelligence to youth readers' advisory, customer service, intellectual freedom, and technology. RAILS Academy allows users to learn anytime, track their progress, and earn certificates for selected courses. New content, including recently recorded webinars, is added regularly. Getting started is simple. Staff can learn more and create an account at <https://railslibraries.org/education/academy> or find RAILS Academy in the Education menu on the RAILS website.

Penworthy Discount for RAILS Libraries

RAILS public libraries are now eligible to receive discounts on print materials from The Penworthy Company. Penworthy's collection development and ordering services provide librarians with a highly curated selection of the most popular titles, featuring series and characters kids request most. Services available include shelf-ready cataloging, processing, GRID ordering for brief MARC records, free shipping, and a rewards program. RAILS will host a webinar in April where Penworthy representatives will answer questions and demo their collection development and ordering platform and services.

HR Source Renewals in Progress

RAILS is once again offering discounted membership to HR Source for qualifying public libraries with annual operating budgets of up to \$1,000,000. This reduced-cost membership provides valuable benefits, including access to an HR Hotline staffed by human resources professionals and employment law attorneys, a complimentary HR Checkup, and exclusive members-only resources available through the organization's website. A renewal email was sent on April 6 to 67 member libraries. HR Source is offering 25% off a full-price membership to 13 former RAILS discount members whose operating budgets have exceeded the \$1,000,000 threshold for the first time this year.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILS at C2E2

RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski attended the Chicago Comics & Entertainment Expo on Friday, March 27th in Chicago. RAILS swag was distributed at the joint American Library Association and Chicago Public Library booth. Ola also took photos at several panel sessions where RAILS members hosted presentations targeted at librarians and educators.

New *Can't Shelve This*: "Not Lost in Translation"

When students walk into school carrying the weight of language barriers, uncertainty, and fear on their shoulders, the right welcome can mean everything. In episode 2.8, RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and IHLS Director of Membership & Outreach Leah Gregory are joined by ¡WEPA! libros CEO Veronica Ramos and South Holland Public Library Cultural Literacy Specialist Rosie Camargo. Together, they share how small actions can turn a library into a place where multilingual students feel safe, seen, and valued.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our March 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](#).

EBSCO Supplemental Resources Renewal

With 150 school and public libraries participating, over 900 subscriptions to individual products, and nearly \$2 million in savings, the July 1 RAILS EBSCO supplemental resource renewal is a significant focus of the Deals & Discounts team from January to June. RAILS staff reach out to the individual libraries, provide support and information about pricing and resources, and work closely with the EBSCO team to ensure that the process goes smoothly, and libraries have access to the resources they need. This year, enhancements to the offerings include several Ultimate upgrades that are now included in the package options, as well as Learn with NoveList Plus. The process is well underway for 2026, with active interactions and engagement happening with new and renewing libraries.

Vendor Webinars

Webinar Title	Date	Registered	Attended
EBSCO Supplemental Resource Discounts for RAILS K–12 Libraries	3/10/2026	15	0

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 April 1, 2026

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
528	296	53	63%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of April 1, 2026

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
77	42	32	93%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

RAILS Negotiating East Peoria Lease

RAILS is currently in discussions with the owner of its East Peoria facility regarding renewal of our lease, which is scheduled to expire at the end of the fiscal year.

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

Find More Illinois Update

RAILS/FMI met with WISCAT on March 11 to discuss the logistics of resource sharing between Illinois and Wisconsin.



Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of April 1, 2026

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
9	71	12	1	93

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
March 2026	1,485
Fiscal Year to Date	13,005

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
March 2026	9,112,916

Find More Illinois Demos/Reviews

Date of Training	Library	Number of Participants
March 5 Training	Rock Falls Twp HS	1
March 19 Training	Millikin University	2

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

The eRead Illinois and Deals and Discounts met to talk about eRead Illinois renewals and procedures. The renewal period began on April 8 and will run through the end of May.



eRead Illinois Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
March 2026	7,945	10,231	18,176
Fiscal Year to Date	114,242	119,730	233,972
Since Palace Project Migration	33,497	37,483	70,980

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
March 2026	1,485
Fiscal Year to Date	13,005

Explore More Illinois Update

In March 2026, 4,107 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in March 2026 were:

- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (161)
- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (144)
- DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (88)
- Chicago Academy of Sciences Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (82)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (76)



The most popular Chicago attractions in March 2026 were:

- Art Institute of Chicago (600)
- Field Museum (470)
- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (468)
- Chicago Academy of Sciences Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (412)

- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (365)

In March, Explore More Illinois welcomed the Chicago Master Singers.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of April 1, 2026

System	Publics	Community Colleges	Total
RAILS	351	3	354
IHLS	110	1	111
CPL	1	n/a	1
Totals	462	4	466

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of April 1, 2026

Attractions	63
Total Attractions in 2025	83

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in March 2026

Organization	March 2026
RAILS/IHLS	983
CPL	3,124
Total	4,107

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

2026 Directors University

The tenth annual Directors University will take place in Bloomington, IL in August 2026. New RAILS member library directors were notified of this opportunity for foundational training in public library directorship. Applications will be accepted through May 8, and accepted participants will be notified by May 23. Directors University is a collaboration between IHLS, ILA, ISL, and RAILS.

CE Highlight of the Month

Almost 250 member library staff registered for “Adult Programming: Start to Finish,” held on March 23. This session was created in direct response to feedback from our members, spanning paraprofessional staff who are new to libraries and programming, all the way to directors seeking content as heard every year at Directors University. The presentation covered the full lifecycle of program development, including identifying and securing speakers, managing contracts and negotiations, and maintaining effective organization throughout the planning process. It also addressed common challenges such as accessibility considerations, program formats, and budget constraints, while offering insight into what defines a successful and engaging program.

Recent CE Events

Agenda item 7.3.1

- **“LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools and Libraries”**, webinar, March 19
- **“Adult Programming from Start to Finish”**, webinar, March 23
- **RAILS Catalyst Online Session #6**, online meeting, April 14
- **“Passive Readers Advisory”**, webinar, April 14
- **LACONI Recharge & RAILS Present: “I Found a Grant. Now What?”**, webinar, April 16

Upcoming CE Events

- **“Can a Leader Be a Friend?”**, webinar, April 20
Potential bias, lack of objectivity, and favoritism are all cited as reasons for leaders to maintain appropriate distance from the people who work for them. Research and experience have shown that the rewards of friendship in the workplace may outweigh the risks, even for bosses and employees. HR Source will address those rewards and risks.
- **“Practical Tips for Improved Digital Accessibility”**, webinar, April 22
Walk through concrete steps that your library can take to offer more accessible and inclusive digital content for all and get new tools to support digital accessibility and a plan for how to make real changes at your library.
- **“Partnerships for the People and Their Libraries”**, webinar, April 23
Learn why partnerships matter, and how to identify the right partnerships by understanding your community’s needs, assess your staff’s capacity, and evaluate which opportunities align best with your goals. Get strategies for forming strong relationships and setting clear expectations.
- **“Understanding Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT)”**, webinar, May 6
Ancel Glink attorneys will open with a foundational overview of PPRT: its origins in Illinois tax law, how it's calculated and distributed, and libraries' rights under the law. Then, two library directors will share their own stories of how they discovered their libraries were owed PPRT funds, the conversations they had with their municipalities, and the concrete steps they took to secure the funding.
- **RAILS Catalyst end-cap event**, Waubensee Community College, May 12
We'll celebrate the work and progress 48 RAILS member library staff have made in our inaugural leadership development cohort.
- **“Top Ten Genealogy Resources for Library Staff”**, webinar, May 12
Genealogist and librarian Tina Beard shares essential tools and tips to help frontline staff confidently answer genealogy questions, including key resources for staff and trusted sources for patrons.
- **“Community as Resistance: Building Courage in Uncertain Times”**, Elmhurst Public Library, May 13
Dr. Anthony Dunbar, Professor in the iSchool at Dominican University and founder and global lead for the Critical Race Theory collective, will discuss how being in genuine community with one another can counter fear, inspire courage, and sustain our humanity in the face of rising authoritarianism and racial injustice. Learn what it means to practice "community courage," how love and solidarity fuel resistance, and what it looks like to build and protect community in our everyday lives.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

April Partnership Meetings

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.

In April the group discussed:

- School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) update
- State legislation including ILA's e-book bill (HB 5236)
- 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 Participate in 2026 PLA Annual Conference

Several RAILS staff members attended the 2026 Public Library Association conference in Minneapolis, MN, March 31-April 3. They attended sessions, met with vendors, and explored new topics.

Anne Slaughter to Present on MLIS Student Panel

On Thursday, April 16, RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter is participating on a "Day in the Life of a MLIS Professional" virtual panel hosted by the ALA Student Chapter at St. Catherine University (St. Paul, MN), aimed at helping students in their Library and Information Science program learn about various MLIS career paths.

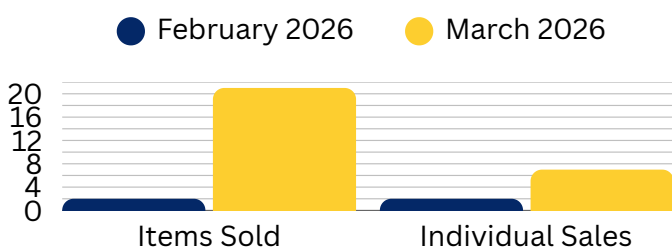
RAILS IT Update

In March, the RAILS IT team reduced telecommunications costs by auditing Verizon account, correcting cost centers, and cancelling unused lines and services. They also led enterprise planning for Microsoft Copilot adoption. There will be a phased rollout approach with a strong emphasis on data security, privacy, FOIA, and governance. IT also migrated staff to a new software option for organizational charts and building layout diagrams; moving from Microsoft Visio to Draw.io will save around \$750/year.

MARCH 2026

			
FOLLOWERS <i>total subscribers</i>	Facebook +59 3,028	Instagram +41 1,854	LinkedIn +64 2,427
REACH <i>accounts shown our content</i>	Facebook +7,432 21,082	Instagram -805 2,545	LinkedIn +1,567 4,105
VIEWS <i>times our content was seen</i>	Facebook +23,093 63,876	Instagram -518 10,812	LinkedIn +3,891 9,175
ENGAGEMENT <i>reactions, comments, and shares</i>	Facebook +814 1,919	Instagram -79 504	LinkedIn +128 329
TOP POST <i>received the most engagement</i>			

 **RAILS Online Store**



 **RAILS Minute Views: 342**

 **Can't Shelve This Listens: 1,872**

Consortial Reports

April 20, 2026

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

Administration

- The CARLI Governance Board annual election is taking place.
- CARLI has submitted its FY27 proposed budget to the University of Illinois System Office for review. The budget modeled reduction scenarios for FY27 – FY30 as requested by the University of Illinois System Office.
- CARLI staff with input from its Resource Sharing Committee are developing an Interlibrary Loan Survey to determine current processes, costs and needs of the membership.
- CARLI staff in collaboration with the CARLI Governance Board have developed a member survey to gather direct input from library directors and staff on usage of OCLC products and services, cataloging activities, and budget context.
- CARLI staff are actively reviewing its website and updating as necessary to meet the requirements of [Title II accessibility](#).
- CARLI has implemented Team Dynamics (TDX) as its support ticketing platform.

I-Share (Alma / Primo VE)

- The Field Museum Library and Chicago History Museum are on-track to be added to I-Share on June 17, 2026.
- CARLI staff are working with CARLI members that subscribe to ebooks available from the Palace Project and OverDrive to make them available via Alma / Primo VE.

CARLI Committees

- CARLI has issued a [call for volunteers](#) for CARLI committees for terms beginning July 1.
- At its March meeting, the Board approved the formation of an I-Share Metadata Task Force to evaluate, recommend, and develop strategies, policies, and workflows that strengthen metadata quality, interoperability, and cooperation across the consortium.

CARLI Scholarship

- [Applications](#) for CARLI's Scholarship are due June 1. The CARLI Scholarship provides financial assistance to current employees of CARLI Governing Member Libraries pursuing graduate studies leading to a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Scholarships may be awarded for both on-campus and/or distance education programs.
- At its March 2026 meeting, the CARLI Governance Board approved the proposal to supplement the CARLI Scholarship in FY 27 and FY 28 with up to \$30,000 from CARLI reserve funds if sponsorships do not meet the monetary needs of the program.

Collections and EResources

- The Board approved the purchase of ebooks with up to \$300,000 from CARLI reserve funds in August 2026 and August 2027.

- CARLI is reviewing responses to an RFI for our aggregated database package that is provided to all CARLI members at no cost.
- The Board approved the purchase of a subscription for the CARLI Office to [CELUS](#) for a period of 5 years beginning in FY27.

Open Educational Resources

- CARLI is reviewing submissions for its [CARLI Member OER Initiative](#).
- CARLI Staff are developing an Illinois Course Materials Survey: Faculty Perspective for faculty at member institutions. The expected launch date for the survey is August 20

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

Rolling Meadows and Wauconda Addition

Rolling Meadows and Wauconda staff are finishing up profiling, where they establish their Polaris settings and policies. CCS staff reviewed timeline, tasks, and assignments for building the new libraires in our database. Member Services met to identify training needs and began to develop an internal training plan.

Profiling will wrap up in early April. Innovative will copy and analyze Rolling Meadows and Wauconda data ahead of data mapping. CCS is compiling marketing samples for libraries to use to promote membership expansion. CCS and Innovative will discuss data load strategies with the goal of reducing downtime during the final data load.

Bibliocore Implementation

Libraries completed site Validation tasks and CCS continues to work with BiblioCommons to resolve. CCS published a Marketing Toolkit for libraries. Training began with a BiblioCore overview webinar led by BiblioCommons staff. Libraires can begin submitting requests to CCS to configure staff users.

Most libraires have established target launch dates. 21 libraries plan to launch mid-May. 5 libraires will launch between July to October. 4 libraries are still undecided.

CCS and BiblioCommons are scheduling additional training sessions, including training on back-end staff features. CCS is finalizing a patron-facing website that includes basic how-to information and FAQ. CCS is researching information for OPAC and search widget configuration and establishing details for the Patron Preview stage.

OrangeBoy Savannah Implementation

CCS has concluded the first round of live training, a recorded webinar, and two office hours sessions. CCS has provided OrangeBoy with a prioritized list of member feedback to address.

Find More Illinois

The CCS Governing Board voted to continue with Find More Illinois for three years. CCS will work with libraries not yet implemented to complete configuration and training by the end of the year. RAILS and CCS will meet to discuss benchmarks for future evaluation.

Innovative and Polaris

LX Starter

Most Beta Libraries finished configuring SPF and DKIM records on their domains. Beta Librarians attended training in early March to learn how to use LX Starter. The Beta Librarians are designing their notices and submitting to CCS for review. CCS is configuring reminder notices for reciprocal patrons and other notice types to be used with testing.

Polaris 8.0 Release

Innovative upgraded the CCS database after-hours on Monday, March 23. Member Services led 8.0-focused training, including a What's New webinar, cataloging, and acquisitions training. CCS is working with volunteer libraries to test new features, such as direct-to-printer printing in Leap and TCP/IP service for exporting from OCLC.

PowerPAC

CCS has been experiencing intermittent performance issues with PowerPAC, seemingly stemming from bot traffic. Staff are continuing to troubleshoot with Innovative support.

Contract Renewal

CCS and Clarivate/Innovative completed our contract renewal for Polaris for 5 years.

Member Engagement Analysis

CCS conducted three focus group sessions between March 25–30. Nineteen library staff from 15 CCS member libraries participated, representing Business Office, Circulation, Communications, Public Services, and Technical Services departments. Feedback from these sessions is being used to develop an engagement survey for member staff.

CCS will distribute the engagement survey to member library staff on Wednesday, April 8. As discussed with the Executive Committee in February, the survey will be sent directly to staff with L2 accounts and shared with library directors to distribute to their staff.

Technology and Infrastructure Changes In Process

CCS transitioned from our physical phone server and analog phone lines for patron notices to a cloud-based service.

CCS staff have recommended moving Web Reports, our locally developed and hosted report repository to the cloud next fiscal year.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative (PLC)

Staffing

Pinnacle's Member Services Librarian, Brittany Smith, resigned from her role to accept a new job at the St. Charles Library. We're currently in the process of reevaluating and filling that position.

Strategic Plan Action Items for 2026

At our annual strategic plan meeting, the board reviewed priorities for 2026. As we approach the end of our current strategic plan, our focus will primarily be on completing remaining projects, including:

- Finalizing the implementation of ILS products such as the Leap Web App, Vega
- Discover catalog and LX Starter for notices.
- Expanding our Learning Management Platform with more interactive content and assessments to check for comprehension
- Rebuilding our in-house collection analysis tool with an emphasis on automation and flexibility
- Begin preparations for next strategic plan (~January 2027)

PrairieCat

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

Member Services and UX:

- PrairieCat staff worked closely with Innovative on upcoming changes to Vega Discover including identifying unexpected issues in Account Portal.
- PrairieCat hosted live training sessions focused on Vega Discover customizations and Mobile App Q&A with more than 30 attendees.
- PrairieCat welcomed 3 new directors this quarter and hosted a new director welcome meeting as well as providing direct outreach and site visits.
- The PrairieCat Engagement Committee is now accepting program proposals for a Virtual PUG (PrairieCat Users Group) Day on September 24 and 25, 2026.
- We are now finalizing our upcoming Resource Sharing Summit on May 5. Each year, we host a session on a specific topic for all levels of staff. This year, our topic will be “Patron behavior policies and best practices”. We will have a representative from Klein, Thorpe, and Jenkins speak on building a policy followed by a panel discussion with several libraries about their policy process. After lunch, we will have a speaker from Rosecrance Behavioral Health who will help library staff learn:
 - Trauma informed practices to better support library users facing barriers such as unhoused patrons or patrons who have mental health challenges
 - Deescalation techniques
 - Best practices for staff to respond to patrons in a timely and direct way that aligns with library policy (including behavior policies and safety and security policies) (While providing good customer service and protecting themselves from burnout)
- We have scheduled two “Ask Anything” virtual open house sessions with the PrairieCat director for May and June.

Library Systems:

- Over the past quarter, we 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.

- Multiple courses delivered through our online learning system TalentLMS are undergoing revisions to improve content accuracy and relevance.
- 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.
- After a lengthy evaluation and testing process, PrairieCat has obtained a quote from Mitinet for bibliographic services. This agreement will replace our previous agreement with Marcive. The agreement is subject to approval by the Delegates at the April 29th meeting. Upon approval, all arrangements will be finalized.
- We are working with OCLC to consolidate one of our members' multiple OCLC symbols into the one symbol that is actively used. Currently, the library uses one of their three existing symbols. This will simplify their processes as well as save money by reducing the number of symbols that we pay for.

Systems:

- The team rolled out new notice templates to correct issue with overdue templates.
- We worked with a vendor on new checkout receipts.
- We are working with Innovative about certificate renewals with respect to new renewal time limits.
- We finished up distribution of new laptops for employees and conversion of old laptops to training machines.
- Due to email disruptions, we worked on removing PrairieCat from a series of email blacklists. This issue has been resolved.
- We continue to troubleshoot issues with automated calls being blocked.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

Nothing to Report.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

RSA Activity Report January - March 2026

Wired: RSA – Iteration #4

Tired: RSA NFP & RAILS Staffing Support

As shown in many superhero movies, sometimes you just need to reboot everything and retell your origin story. This is essentially what we've done to RSA over the last 18 months. We created a brand new RSA on July 1st 2024, then worked to transition from RAILS 'everything' over to RSA owned and operated 'everything' on 1 January 2026 effectively completing the transition to RSA's 4th iteration.

- Iteration 1, 1980's – 2000: RSA as a standalone Not for Profit organization with members in 4 library systems

- Iteration 2, 2003 - 2011: RSA operating inside Alliance Library System (ALS) as an ALS department with independent funding
- Iteration 3, 2011-2024: RSA NFP operating as a shell organization, with all staffing and operational support provided through RAILS staff
- Iteration 3.5, 1 July 2024 – 31 December 2025: working towards full independence. This was our chrysalis phase.
- Iteration 4, 1 January 2026: New and Exciting! Fully independent and ready to take on the world.

Turns out, running an existing organization while seeking to minimize disturbances to our member and non-management staff, while simultaneously creating, organizing, setting up, and launching a brand-new organization is a lot of work. Everything we are, touch, use, need, or is required for staff is all new in the last 4 months. Antony and I, with help from Erica and James, have put in the same amount of work to this as we would have done for a full system migration to another vendor. So yea, we're happy to be completed so we can resume doing our actual jobs!

Upgrades:

With the independence project winding down, it's time to spin up all the things we haven't had time to finish the last 18 months. The first of those was upgrading our Symphony system to the latest version 4.2. That went shockingly smoothly. Now we're playing around with the new options to making item types non-transitable and the shared ownership of reports.

We're also in the midst of upgrading our firewall from an older Cisco model hosted in the Springfield CMS hosting site, to new firewalls. One is hosted on the web as a virtual firewall, the other is a new hardware box in our East Peoria office that we'll be able to use as a backup and emergency alternative path to the system. We've successfully tested both with members and are slowly moving things to the online firewall via DNS redirections. We're doing the SIP ports first since there are fewer users of those and we know exactly who still needs to update their local settings since we can see that in our old firewall. Then we'll move the library Workflows connections over to the new firewall and work with those that need help to update their configurations.

Member Visits:

We have a policy that we'll visit every RSA member and branch once every 18 months. That means we have to visit about 30 individual buildings every quarter. This does not include training, new directors visits, meetings, and other visit reasons. As of 30 June, we'll have visited all 175 RSA library buildings in the previous 18 months. Then we start again.

- January – 12 in person visits
- February – 27 in person visits
- March – 18 in person visits

RSA's membership of primarily small public and school libraries has a history of showing negative consequences of not receiving in person visits. They are so busy keeping the doors open and lights on, that they can't focus too much on RSA and all that we do. These visits connect our members with our consortia staff and led to much more engagement even months after the visits. It's a lot of work, but we can't overstate the importance of visiting and following up on issues noted during these visits.

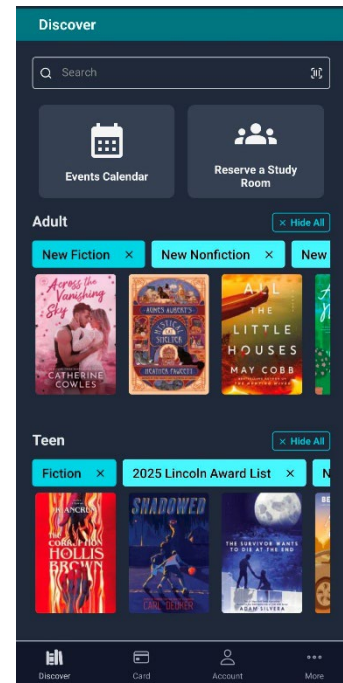
System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Aspen features of note

Aspen and Library Discovery App (LiDA) have monthly releases which include important features since the January 2026 RAILS Consortia Committee report from SWAN.

Mobile app (LiDA)

The 26.02 release included the option to add custom home screen links in the app. This was an enhancement requested when SWAN went live on the Aspen LiDA app and is a welcome feature for many of our libraries to highlight their programs, events, and services. Carol Stream Public Library has taken advantage of this feature, for any SWAN libraries that want to check out their instance of the app.



Palace Project/eRead Illinois integration

Grove for Libraries and Lyrasis have made major strides in improving the Palace Project indexing speeds. We are currently preparing a go-live plan and dates to enable the Palace Project integration into Aspen catalogs.

Hoopla Flex integration

A new version of the Hoopla API endpoints is now available. This version, V2, was created to support library consortia. V2 has the capability to bring in each Hoopla library's Instant collection and supports individual Flex collections. Grove for Libraries has been working closely with Midwest Tape to test in a staging environment, and they have recently updated our Aspen test environment to support this updated API.

SWAN is currently testing to ensure that Instant titles are coming through the API and that any blocks to titles and changes in price caps are observed. Once we can confirm the Instant titles are working as expected, we will begin testing Flex collections and ensure that individual Flex collections are appearing and working as they currently do on the native Hoopla platform.

Youth services UI improvements

The 26.03 release included two long-time enhancement requests from our youth services librarians: a new picture book format and the ability to lock filters to save them across different keyword searches.

Strategic Planning updates

SWAN has completed two strategic planning retreats with SWAN staff and the SWAN governing board. There are three events planned with SWAN membership which will be led by SWAN Board members. The goal is to share our initial five year plan with member libraries the first week of June for feedback.

SWAN Expo Planning

We have begun planning our August 22, 2026 event. This year, we have formed a Programming Committee to involve a different selection of SWAN staff in the planning process. This group will build out the session schedule, evaluate member program submissions, and align the schedule with a theme.

The Administration/Management team will oversee other elements of the event such as communications, registration, pricing, meals, and other logistics of the day. This group visited the event space at NIU Naperville and finalized the meeting rooms we will have at our disposal for the event.