
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD

Friday, April 24, 2026 | 1:00 PM

Northern Illinois University Founders Memorial Library, Room 393
Normal Road and Carroll Avenue, DeKalb, IL.

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Gwen Gregory, President, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm on Friday, April 24, 2026, at the Founders Memorial Library at Northern Illinois University.

2. Roll Call of Committee Members

Palmisano called the roll of the Board members.

Founders Library: Monica Caldicott, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Catherine Yanikoski.

RAILS Burr Ridge: Jean Carroll

RAILS East Peoria: No attendance

Zoom: Jennifer Hovanec

Absent: Ron Holohan, Karen Voitik

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests at Founders Library: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Kate Niehoff, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Barbara Posinger, Jessica Silva, Anne Slaughter, Wesley Smith, Sharon Swanson,

Guests at RAILS Burr Ridge: no guests

Guests at RAILS East Peoria: no guests

Guests on Zoom: Sam Daly, Mark Hatch, Ryan Hebel, Rebecca Miller, Rita Stephans

4. Public comments

There were no public comments.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1. Adoption of the Agenda

5.2. RAILS Board Minutes of March 27, 2026

5.3. Approval of Disbursements, March 2026

Parks moved to approve the consent agenda. Gove seconded, and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson presented the March 2026 financial report. Through March, both the general fund revenues and expenditures were above budget. General revenues were above budget primarily due to receipt of the federal portion of the Area and Per Capita Grant funds, which were not anticipated until May. Concerns about interest rate movements continue to center on inflation, the conflict in the Middle East, and the rapidly shifting, evolving economy. Library materials expenditures were below budget due to the implementation of the new eRead Illinois platform, which caused timing differences between budgeted and actual eRead Illinois content purchases. Additionally, Swanson reported that group purchases, travel, continuing education, vehicle expenditures, and professional services were below budget in March. Fuel prices have remained consistently below budget through February, but have risen sharply since then. Swanson also mentioned that several building projects were moved to the Capital Projects fund.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

Gregory thanked everyone for visiting the Northern Illinois University library and for taking the opportunity to see how an academic library works.

7.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports

7.2.1. Advocacy Committee

7.2.2. Consortia Committee

7.2.3. Executive Committee

7.2.4. Policy Committee

7.2.5. Resource Sharing Committee

7.2.6. Universal Service Committee

Nothing was added to the committee reports.

7.3. RAILS Reports

7.3.1. RAILS Monthly Report

Before giving the report, Harris thanked Northern Illinois University for hosting the RAILS staff and Board at the library today. In recent news, RAILS was mentioned at the Evanston/Skokie District 65's Board meeting for the 2023 statement that RAILS strongly supports the Association of Illinois School Library Educators' (AISLE) efforts to encourage school districts to offer school library programs staffed by licensed school librarians. According to reports, District 65 is eliminating middle school librarian positions starting next school year (2026-2027) due to budget cuts. In two federal legal cases regarding funding for the Institute of Museum and Library

Services (IMLS), the US Court of Appeals permanently dropped its case, and the American Library Association (ALA) case was settled. Additionally, ALA denounced bill HR7661. The bill is designed to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to prohibit funds that include sexually oriented materials. At the state level, Harris reported that HB4261, which proposes an increase in per capita grant funds for library systems, school and public libraries, has moved to the Illinois Senate after a 107-0 vote in the general assembly on April 8, 2026. HB5236, also known as the e-book bill, moved to the Illinois Senate. Harris announced that the U.S. Department of Justice extended the compliance deadline for web accessibility by one year. The RAILS Digital Accessibility Pulse Page is a helpful tool for RAILS' membership, offering free tools and training resources on this topic. Harris shared with the Board the Chicago Tribune front-page article about e-book legislation in which she was included and announced that she will be on Fox News live on Monday, April 27, to be interviewed about the inequity of e-book pricing in libraries. Lastly, Harris thanked the Consulting & Continuing Education team at RAILS for their work on the RAILS Academy learning platform. Board members are encouraged to look at this new learning resource.

7.3.2. RAILS Service of the Month: Member Engagement Update

Silva, Member Engagement Specialist, reported on the numerous ways she engages with the RAILS' membership. Through networking group support, site visits, member meetups, online roundtables, and the My Library Is.. grant program, Silva engages with the membership and promotes RAILS' services. Silva reported on the numerous statewide committees she serves on and the recent conferences she has attended.

7.4. Illinois State Library Report

Stephens from the Illinois State Library reported that staff are busy reading the Public Library Security Grant applications. The grant focuses on technology-based safety enhancements for public libraries.

8. New business

8.1. Draft FY2027 Operational Plan

Harris discussed the draft FY2027 RAILS Operational Plan. The Operational Plan includes the services RAILS offers to the membership and to the state. The plan and budget discussions will be finalized and brought to the Board at the May 22 board meeting for approval. Both documents are part of the yearly System Area and Per Capita Grant application due to the Illinois State Library on May 31, 2026.

8.2. Certification Report 2026

Before discussing the certification withdrawal and suspension list, Silva thanked the RAILS administrative team for their persistent work in contacting all RAILS member libraries to ask them to complete the annual library certification. Withdrawal from RAILS membership is voluntary and may be for several reasons, including failure to meet membership standards. Suspended libraries are recommended by RAILS due to the inability to contact a library representative. Certified letters will be sent to the suspended libraries next week.

Vancina moved to approve the members recommended for withdrawal and suspension, and to send them to the Illinois State Library for final approval. Yanikoski seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.3. Executive Director Evaluation

Gregory discussed the Executive Director evaluation process and reported that the evaluation survey will be emailed to the Board on Monday, April 27. The survey will include organizational goals, accomplishments, a performance summary, and an opportunity to suggest next year's goals. The deadline to complete the survey is May 15.

8.4. FOIA Policy review

Filapek presented the revised Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Policy, which was last reviewed in 2012. The changes made were to remove procedural details that are now listed in the FOIA Guide. To remain compliant, the guide will be updated annually. The revised FOIA Policy was reviewed and approved by both the Policy Committee and by legal.

Parks moved to approve the FOIA Policy. Kowalcze seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.5. Strategic Plan Update

Harris announced that 455 members responded to the strategic plan survey. Consultant Cindy Fesemyer has interviews scheduled with partner organizations and has begun holding focus group meetings. Data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be compiled and reviewed during the planning process. The Board strategic plan workshop will be held on Tuesday, June 30, from 1-4:00 pm at the RAILS Burr Ridge office.

9. Board Development

9.1. Sustainability in Libraries: Rebecca Miller, Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Gregory introduced Rebecca Miller, the Coordinator of the Sustainable Libraries

Initiative, which is part of the Suffolk Cooperative Library System in New York. Miller has followed sustainability trends in libraries for decades and gave an overview of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative and its certification program. The Sustainable Library Certification Program (SLCP) provides library leaders with a structured path to increase a library's commitment to environmental stewardship, economic feasibility, and social equity. Miller shared that as many as 30 libraries are certified each year after an approximate 2-year commitment. The program is designed to embed sustainable practices within the organization.

10. RAILS Board Member Reports

Kowalcze reported that after a successful community fundraiser, Frankfort Public Library purchased a community vehicle, just in time for the library's 60th anniversary party.

Caldicott shared that on Friday, May 1, the Community High School District #128 library is holding a "Check-out Party" where students can check out up to 10 books to read during summer break. The school's library will temporarily be used as an AP testing space.

Parks reported that in March, the Peoria Public Library held a naturalization ceremony. Another highlight was the library's launch of a new logo during National Library Week.

11. Meeting Recap and Agenda Building

The next RAILS board meeting will be held on Friday, May 22, 2026, at 10:00 am. The earlier start time is due to the upcoming Memorial Day holiday weekend. The May agenda will include a RAILS data update as the service of the month, and a report on the Library Demographic Profile Project as the board development topic. Also on the agenda is the 6-month review of closed session minutes and approval of the System Area and Per Capita Grant application.

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 pm.