



DATE: September 4, 2026
TO: RAILS Resource Sharing Committee
FROM: Joe Filapek, Associate Executive Director
SUBJECT: Resource Sharing Committee - Introduction

As we begin a new year of work for the RAILS Board Resource Sharing Committee, I want to welcome our new and returning members and provide some background on the committee's role and the kinds of issues it has considered in recent years. The committee brings together representatives from different types, sizes, and geographic areas of RAILS member libraries, along with RAILS staff and other ex officio members. This diversity is an important strength of the committee, since resource sharing might look different depending on a library's community, collection, policies, staffing, technology, and local partnerships.

Committee Charge

The committee's broad charge is to *investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase resource sharing in Illinois*, particularly among RAILS member libraries, in order to provide the best library services possible to Illinois residents. The charge gives the committee considerable latitude in how it carries out this responsibility. Among other things, the committee is asked to identify and address barriers to resource sharing; investigate best practices; make recommendations for cost-effective collaboration; provide feedback on RAILS collaborative projects; explore how physical and electronic materials can best be shared; and recommend improvements to delivery services. The charge specifically identifies projects such as Find More Illinois and collaborative approaches to meeting shared needs as potential areas of committee work.

Previous Committee Discussions

The committee's work over the past couple of years provides a good illustration of the breadth of this charge. Find More Illinois is a regular topic for this committee, including discussions about participation by different types of libraries, academic library involvement, pricing and sustainability, and the potential for resource sharing beyond Illinois into neighboring states. As of June 2026, Find More Illinois provides access to more than 9 million items and includes participation from public, school, special, and academic libraries.

Delivery has also been a regular area of discussion. Recent meetings have included updates on delivery operations, delivery counts, communication with member libraries, changes to the RAILS/IHLS shuttle, and broader questions about patron expectations for interlibrary loan and the speed with which materials should be delivered. Committee members have also discussed the changing balance between physical and electronic collections and how libraries are responding to increased demand for both.



Other recent topics have included eRead Illinois and the transition of its collection to the Palace Project; RAILS Deals & Discounts and opportunities for collaborative purchasing; the RAILS resource sharing map and how data can help libraries better understand resource-sharing activity; digital accessibility of electronic resources; and issues affecting library access and resource sharing that arise from state or federal legislation. The committee has also used its meetings as an opportunity for members to share what they are experiencing in their own libraries—for example, changes in circulation patterns, staffing challenges associated with interlibrary loan, space limitations, demand for e-books and audiobooks, and continued patron demand for print materials.

Ultimately, the committee's charge provides an opportunity to step back and consider where resource sharing is headed and where RAILS can make a meaningful difference for member libraries and their patrons. With that in mind, I would encourage committee members to think about the following questions as we begin the year:

- **What resource-sharing challenges or opportunities are you seeing at your own library that you think RAILS should better understand or address?**
- **Are there areas where greater collaboration among RAILS libraries could save money, improve services, or provide access to resources that individual libraries could not provide on their own?**
- **What emerging trends—technology, collections, delivery, e-resources, patron expectations, or otherwise—do you think could significantly affect resource sharing over the next several years?**
- **Are there existing RAILS resource-sharing programs or services that you think the committee should examine more closely, either to identify improvements or to consider opportunities for growth?**
- **What would you like to learn more about during your time on the committee, and what would make the committee's work most valuable to you and the libraries you represent?**

These questions are intended to help us identify potential areas of focus for the coming year. The committee does not need to limit itself to the topics it has discussed in the past; one of the goals for the coming year should be to identify issues where the collective experience and perspective of this committee can help RAILS better support resource sharing across Illinois.