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Executive Director Report, November 2026

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Federal and Illinois Legislative Updates

There was a meeting of the Illinois Library Association's (ILA) Public Policy Committee on November 9. The meeting included a federal and state update, a discussion of legislation affecting the audit process for local government, updates on the Executive Board legislative priorities, and updates on the working groups dedicated to solutions for harassment protections, residential development impact fees, and process improvement for submitting legislative proposals. Aaron Skog also gave an update on the eBook legislation that has passed the House and is currently in the Senate.

You can now review the Illinois Library Association's 2027 legislative agenda on the ILA website.

Thank you to Public Policy Committee Chair Paul Mills, who joined us at our November 12 RAILS Member Update to share the FY2027 legislative priorities with the RAILS membership. The next meeting of ILA PPC is scheduled for December 7.

AISLE Annual Conference in Lombard

The RAILS Team appreciated the valuable opportunity to connect directly with numerous school library members at the AISLE Conference in Lombard from November 12-14. Members of the RAILS Board and RAILS staff—including Joanna Marek, Janette Derucki, and Anna Behm —showcased the depth of our organization's expertise by leading insightful sessions on advocacy, telling your library's story through data, and eRead Illinois & the Palace Project transition. Additionally, our Communications team deserves recognition for once again exceeding expectations with a captivating booth design and engaging giveaways, which resulted in significant positive feedback and highlights RAILS' commitment to innovative member engagement.

RAILS models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion

CCDNN Update

In October, the Cook County Digital Navigator Network closed applications for the Guiding Team 2.0. This team is responsible for helping to strengthen the digital equity ecosystem in Cook County. We received 20 applications and accepted all 20 applicants! We have great representation from big and small libraries, as well as a really nice geographical range. The first guiding team meeting happened on November 9. The team will now start work on things like shaping resources and supports, giving feedback on new programs, and serving as ambassadors for digital equity in libraries. Thanks to everyone who applied! We can't wait to get started.

RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future

ILA Library Legislative Meetups

The Illinois Library Association will host a series of three virtual Legislative Meetups on December 9, 10, and 16. Each meetup is scheduled from noon to 1pm, and is designed to strengthen library advocacy across Illinois. The December 9 and 10 meetups will connect legislators with library supporters, while the December 16 event will not include legislators and will instead focus on practical advocacy steps for library supporters. These events are free and will not be recorded. Registration for all three events is available on the ILA website.

School Library Advocacy Toolkit

The Illinois Partnership for School Libraries – a group of statewide library partners including AISLE, IHLS, ILA, RAILS, and others – is excited to announce the launch of the all-new School Library Advocacy Toolkit. The toolkit offers useful information and resources for school librarians. Each item was chosen for its broad impact and application for library advocacy, all conveniently located in one place for easy access. The new RAILS Board statement of support is also included.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

E-Book Advocacy Update

I had the opportunity to present in late October and early November at the Wisconsin Library Association and Michigan Library Association annual conferences. Presenting alongside Ryan Livergood, Sara Murray, Sherry Wichitchu, and Aaron Skog on current efforts in Illinois and Minnesota was an inspiring experience. It gave us a vital space to connect over shared challenges and learn how neighboring states are standing steadfast in their commitment to their communities.

RAILS team members Leila Heath, Anna Behm, and myself continue to attend meetings of the eBook subcommittee of the ILA Advocacy and Public Policy committees, which continues to work together towards awareness of the legislative process in Illinois. I will also participate in a December 8 webinar from the Digital Shelf that will feature efforts happening across the country, as well as a panel discussion about important steps for states interested in moving these efforts forward to consider.

ILA Executive Director Announcement

An announcement of the next ILA Executive Director is expected on November 19, the date of the next ILA Executive Board Meeting.

Lyrasis CEO Search

I have accepted an appointment to the search committee for the next CEO of Lyrasis. I am also currently serving on the Lyrasis Board, as well as on the Finance Committee. I have learned a great deal already from my experience on the Lyrasis board and I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this process.

Looking Ahead to January

- **January Service of the Month topics – RAILS Human Resources with Sam Daly and Social Media and Libraries with Ola Gronski**

This Month at RAILS – November 2026

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:

RAILS Staff Participate at the 2026 ILA Annual Conference

RAILS had a blast at the 2026 ILA Annual Conference, October 6-8 in Peoria. We are fired up! Around 560 people stopped by our booth to participate in our photo booth, grab swag, or learn more about RAILS programs and services.

RAILS staff also contributed their knowledge and expertise! RAILS staff presented in over 10 education sessions, poster sessions, and lightning talks. With a wide variety of topics, there was something for everyone.

A big shout-out to RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva who was co-chair of the Planning Committee. Jessica attended many planning meetings and had a big role on-site in making sure things went smoothly.









Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILS Launches Libraries Connect Grants
On November 1, RAILS launched applications for the 2027 RAILS Libraries Connect Grant, formerly known as the My Library Is... Grant. Despite the name change, the grant details, spirit, and requirements have not changed. These grants are designed to help libraries tell their story and are open to ALL types of RAILS member libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized). Libraries can apply for up to $5,000. The deadline to apply is Monday, February 1, 2027.

RAILS Hosts Libraries Connect Grant Info Session, 10/21
On Wednesday, October 21, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica silva hosted RAILS Libraries Connect Grant Information Session. There were 34 participants. We discussed the RAILS Libraries Connect grant, past grant projects, and the grant process.

Jessica Silva Hosts Virtual Library Visits
RAILS Member Engagement Manager held a series of virtual visits in October. In these visits, Jessica discussed RAILS benefits and services such as continuing education, deals & discounts, grants, and upcoming RAILS events:

- Chadwick Public Library District, October 6
- Boxer Library, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (North Chicago, IL), October 27

RAILS Hosts Online Roundtable on Textbook Affordability, 10/2
On Friday, October 2, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva hosted RAILS Online Roundtable about Textbook Affordability with four different academic librarians. There were 25 participants. The group discussed grants available for open educational resources and ways to support affordable textbook accession.

RAILS Hosts Online Roundtable on Young Adult Literature, 10/22
On Thursday, October 22, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva hosted RAILS Online Roundtable: Young Adult Literature with Elizabeth Brommelseik, Palatine High School librarian. There were 38 attendees. The group discussed young adult titles, marketing books, and award-winning titles.

New *Can't Shelve This:* "The Good, the Bot, and the Ugly"
Artificial intelligence can't replace teachers, but it is changing how students learn. In episode 3.3 of Can't Shelve This, RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki and IHLS Director of Membership & Outreach Leah Gregory are joined by Learning Technology Center's Emily Flach to discuss AI's growing presence in schools, from literacy and student privacy to research and critical thinking. Together, they explore how we can keep learning human-centered in an increasingly AI-powered world. Listen now on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, and more.

RAILS Social Media Engagement
See the report at the end for info on our October 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.

New Discount – Los Amigos Books

The RAILS Deals & Discounts team has recently partnered with Chicago bookstore Los Amigos Books to bring discounts on their Spanish-language and bilingual print materials to RAILS libraries of all types. Los Amigos Books specializes in sourcing culturally relevant Spanish, English and bilingual books from domestic and international publishers and independent authors.

Several standing order programs are available to help libraries expand their collections for children, young adults, and adults featuring Spanish, English, and Bilingual books by Latine or BIPOC authors. Discounts available to RAILS members include free shipping on standing order programs.

January Renewals

The Deals & Discounts team has been working to finalize many renewals and new orders for group purchase deals with subscription dates from January 1 – December 31. These deals include Swank Movie Licensing & Streaming for Public Libraries, Swank Movie Licensing & Streaming for K-12 Libraries, BookBrowse, Blinkist, Gale Presents: Udemy, Infobase, and JSTOR. The team has contacted 368 libraries to confirm renewals.

During this time, the team's work includes meeting with vendors to discuss updates and negotiate pricing, contacting participating libraries with renewal terms, developing promotional content and hosting webinars, answering subscription questions, and following up on renewal decisions.

Vendor Webinars

Title	Date	Registered	Live Attendees
Infobase for Public Libraries: Discover Video, Learning, and Career Exploration Resources	10/14	9	4
Swank Movie Licensing: Movie Events Simplified with Swank Streaming	10/15	29	12
Udemy: Explore New Features, AI Tools, and Learning Resources	10/27	12	6
JSTOR for K-12 Libraries	10/29	7	3
Total		**57**	**25**

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 November 1, 2026

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
538	322	30	64%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of November 1, 2026

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
124	65	53	96%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

On October 1, RAILS Consortial Services Supervisor Barb Miller, along with Leila Heath, conducted focus groups for academic libraries. Participants from the Old Town School of Folk Music, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Gerber-Hart Library and Archives, Poetry Foundation, Field Museum, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Engineering Systems, and Morton Arboretum joined the discussions and provided valuable insight into the unique needs and perspectives of special libraries related to resource sharing.

On October 15, Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Mark Hatch, Leila Heath, and Barb Miller met with the Wisconsin State Library to discuss outstanding details and delivery concerns in regards to the potential of FMI sharing resources with libraries across Wisconsin.

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

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
14	72	11	1	98

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
October 2026	1,500
Fiscal Year to Date	6,577

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
October 2026	9,576,340

Find More Illinois Demos and Training

Library	Date	Number of Participants
Northwest Suburban College (retrain)	10/13/2026	1
Richard A. Mautino Memorial Library (retrain)	10/14/2026	3
Moraine Valley Community College (demo)	10/21/2026	3
Chadwick Public Library District (retrain)	10/22/2026	1
Chadwick Public Library District (retrain)	10/27/2026	1

E-Content Programs

RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm met regularly with the Palace Project team to discuss the status of Palace Project onboarding and development. The team provided a breakdown of eRead Illinois member schools that have not been onboarded to the platform yet and why, as well as the status of the Unbound collection transfers, and other development priorities. As of November 3, 93% of schools were either completely onboarded to the app or live in test mode. All school libraries have been contacted by The Palace Project and RAILS teams and the remaining are being onboarded as their necessary information is provided and processed. .

The Palace Project team hosted a webinar on October 14 about accessing your Palace Project statistics. The webinar was open to all Palace Project member libraries across the country. There were several Illinois libraries in attendance, many of whom asked great questions.

E-Content Checkouts October 2026

Collection	Distributer	Platform	E-Book Checkouts	Audiobook Checkouts	Total Checkouts	Total FY Checkouts
eRead Illinois	Palace	Palace Project	19,957	23,792	43,749	129,642
Palace Bookshelf	Palace	Palace Project	214	0	214	637
Multiple	OverDrive	Palace Project	28	87	115	344
Multiple	CloudLibrary	Palace Project	7	1	8	62
Inkie.org Library	BiblioBoard	Palace Project	810	0	810	1,606
Inkie.org Library	BiblioBoard	BiblioBoard	3,720	0	3,720	9,552
Total Collections			**24,736**	**23,880**	**48,616**	**141,843**

Explore More Illinois Update

During the ILA Annual Conference, RAILS Special Projects Librarian Gates Marquez joined the Deals & Discounts team to meet with LocalHop, another software vendor who provides pass reservation software similar to Quipu's ePASS. The group discussed many of LocalHop's library software products including the Activity Pass software to better understand the advantages and limitations of their products and continue to become familiar with the LocalHop team. Gates will be meeting again with LocalHop in November to continue to discuss the specifics of the Activity Pass software in order to strengthen awareness of the pass reservation software environment for libraries and potential value adds for the Explore More Illinois platform.

Most Popular Attractions – Downstate & Suburban Cardholders in October 2026

Attraction	Location	Reservations Made
The Morton Arboretum	Lisle	786
Cantigny	Wheaton	282
Chicago Botanic Garden	Glencoe	104
Griffin Museum of Science and Industry	Chicago	50
Andreson Japanese Gardens	Rockford	47

Most Popular Attractions – Chicago Cardholders in October 2026

Attraction	Location	Reservations Made
Art Institute of Chicago	Chicago	581
Brookfield Zoo Chicago	Brookfield	500
Field Museum	Chicago	413
The Morton Arboretum	Lisle	320
Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum	Chicago	174

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

System	Publics	Community Colleges	Total
RAILS	351	4	355
IHLS	114	1	115
CPL	1	n/a	1
Totals	**466**	**5**	**471**

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of November 1, 2026

Attractions	75
Total Attractions in FY27	83

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in October 2026

Organization	October 2026
RAILS/IHLS	1,781
CPL	3,004
Total	4,785

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

TOTAL VIEWS IN OCTOBER

7,261

views

Top 5 Most Viewed in October	Views	% of Total
Refusal as Instruction: Talking to Patrons About AI	**602**	8.3%
Level Up Your Book Displays	**485**	6.7%
Where's My Book? Navigating the Dewey Decimal System	**447**	6.2%
Adult Library Programs That Work	**273**	3.8%
How To Handle Angry Customers	**182**	2.5%

CE Event Grants Awarded

RAILS awarded $6,350 in CE Event Grants to help libraries, networking groups, and library consortia offer valuable training opportunities for library staff. All funded events will be open for registration to RAILS member staff in advance on L2. Grants include:

- Arlington Heights Memorial Library for "Libraries Beyond Their Walls: Building Equitable, Data-Informed Community Engagement" webinar: $2,000 for speaker fees
- ATLAS for Multi-Library Day: $1600 to support venue rental and speaker fees
- Oak Lawn Public Library for the 2026 Library Administrators Seminar: $1550 for speaker fees
- West of 47 Networking Group for the Illinois Small and Rural Library Conference: $1200 for conference materials

Updated Administrative Ready Reference Available

The Administrative Ready Reference tool has been updated and expanded and is now available statewide in iLead alongside the Trustee Training portal. The iLEAD Ready Reference is the authoritative source on public library governance, operations, compliance, and best practices in Illinois. The iLead Ready Reference can be accessed in the Trustee section of the RAILS website, or via the iLEAD site.

Recent CE Events

- **De-Escalation and Crisis Response Tools with PAVE Prevention,** webinar, October 20
- **Thinking Through AI Policy For Your Library,** webinar, October 21
- **When the Storm Comes: Preparing Communities with Ready NOW,** webinar, October 28
- **Strengthening Your Professional Influence and Impact,** online meeting, October 30
- **Finding the Spark: How to Create Highly Engaged Student Learning,** webinar, November 2
- **Project Management for the Rest of Us,** webinar, November 3

Upcoming CE Events

- **You're Already an Advocate: Advocacy Without Adding to Your To-Do List,** webinar, November 16
  Advocacy opportunities happen every day at the service desk, during programs, through community partnerships, in conversations with patrons, and in the stories we share. This session will help you

recognize those everyday moments, turn them into meaningful advocacy, and find simple ways to communicate your library's impact.

- **Session & Social: A Seed Library for Every Library,** Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, November 18
  Get guidance on different ways to offer seeds including seed packaging, display options, seed sources, circulation guidelines, educational resources, and cataloging tips. There'll also be time to network with fellow librarians to exchange ideas and share strategies.
- **ADA Considerations and Best Practices for Virtual Webinars and Meetings,** webinar, November 30
  Learn about ADA requirements and best practices for creating accessible virtual meetings and webinars. Topics will include accessible meeting platforms, marketing and outreach, accessible materials, ASL interpreters and captioning, and strategies for managing inclusive virtual events.
- **Reel 'Em In: Engaging Your Audience with Instagram Videos,** webinar, December 2
  Get tips and tricks for developing a video philosophy, navigating Instagram's ever-changing algorithms, and using creative techniques like camera angles and pacing to capture attention.
- **Mastering Microsoft Teams,** webinar, December 3
  Keil Cross will share tips and tricks he's picked up over eight years of using Teams at Palatine Library and Harper College. He'll cover helpful features, best practices, and ways to make Teams easier to use.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

November Partnership Meeting

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 November, the group discussed:

- A 2026 SLATE Census update
- A potential materials challenge at a school library
- National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC, February 24-25, 2027
- The upcoming AISLE Annual Conference in Lombard, IL

And much more! We will continue to keep the board updated on these meetings.

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

RAILS IT Update

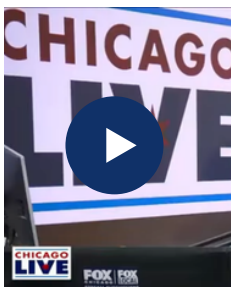
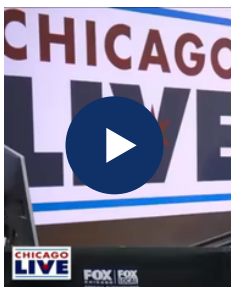
In October, the RAILS IT Team worked quickly to respond to a vulnerability called PHP2Shell. This was a widespread issue that many organizations faced. RAILS servers were updated to mitigate the vulnerability, service center firewalls were updated, and the two legacy systems that could not immediately be patched were moved behind the firewall and restricted to VPN access. After updating they have been made available again.

The IT Team also worked on a project to redesign production server infrastructure. This change will result in major performance and resiliency improvements.

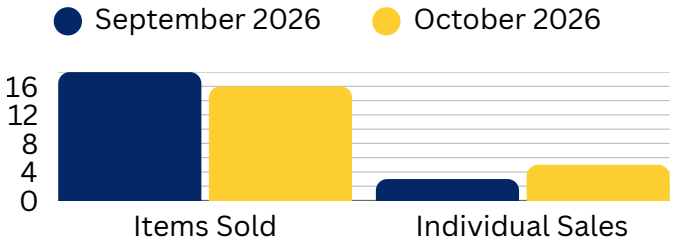
The IT Team also worked on deploying new iPads to all RAILS service centers. Charging walls have been updated with new chargers.

OCTOBER 2026

RAILS
DIGITAL MARKETING
BOARD REPORT

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
FOLLOWERS *total subscribers*	+61 **3,469**	-4 **5,739**	+35 **2,732**
REACH *accounts shown our content*	+9,391 **16,556**	+2,863 **8,530**	+1,046 **3,289**
VIEWS *times our content was seen*	+18,499 **42,934**	+15,703 **39,957**	+2,360 **6,776**
ENGAGEMENT *reactions, comments, and shares*	+501 **995**	+488 **1,336**	+352 **228**
TOP POST *received the most engagement*			

RAILS Online Store



***RAILS Minute* Views: 752**

***Can't Shelve This* Listens: 1,378**

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Consortial Reports

November 9, 2026

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)/I-Share

CARLI Governance Board

The CARLI Annual Meeting is on November 10, 2026, in Champaign. CARLI holds an Annual Directors Meeting on the same date prior to its Annual Meeting.

CARLI Staff

Margaret Chambers, Director and Adviser, Membership and Communications retired on September 30, 2026.
Elizabeth Clarage, Director of Collections Services, will retire on December 31, 2026.

I-Share

CARLI has created an I-Share Metadata Task Force. Its goals are to:

- Assess and enhance metadata practices across member institutions to ensure consistency, transparency, and alignment with shared consortial priorities.
- Recommend improvements to Network Zone workflows, system configuration, and metadata governance.
- Support innovation by evaluating emerging metadata standards and technologies relevant to the consortium.

JKM Library is closed. CARLI is removing JKM Library materials from I-Share.

Continuing Education

CARLI is pleased that Tenn-Share, Tennessee Library Consortium joined the Professional Development Alliance.

E-Resources

CARLI began a subscription to CELUS on July 1, 2026. CELUS is an online platform that helps libraries and consortia harvest, clean, and analyze e-resource usage statistics. CELUS was created by the CzechELib, the Czech national consortium of academic libraries. CELUS stands for CzechELib Usage Statistics. The platform can harvest both COUNTER and non-COUNTER compliant data.

Open Educational Resources

Twelve member libraries were chosen to receive funding for OER projects from the CARLI Member OER Initiative.
CARLI working with its OER Committee will soon announce the 2026 Illinois Open Educator Awards to recognize outstanding higher education faculty and staff who demonstrate innovation and excellence in the use, creation, and advocacy of Open Educational Resources (OER).

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

CCS is Hiring!

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) is seeking an experienced metadata librarian with a passion for collaboration and continuous improvement to join our team of ten. Join our member-driven organization at CCS and play a key role in supporting over 30-member libraries and the communities they serve.

Reporting to the Executive Director, this new full-time position as the Manager of Metadata Services will develop CCS's expanding metadata and technical services offerings to members in addition to providing ongoing support to members related to cataloging, serials, and acquisitions.

See our website for more details.

Rolling Meadows and Wauconda Addition

Rolling Meadows and Wauconda libraries went live with CCS on Tuesday, October 20. CCS and member library staff will continue work on bibliographic deduplication. The new members will have additional reports training in the coming weeks.

Bibliocore Implementation

As of October 1, 28 libraries and CCS are using BiblioCore as their primary discovery layer. 2 libraries are in Public Preview. 2 libraires are in extended preview with launch dates TBD.

In addition, several libraries published new Browse & Discover home pages, including Morton Grove and Cary.

Find More Illinois

The Mount Prospect Public Library launched Find More Illinois on September 28. The Vernon Area and Waukegan libraries are working on initial start up tasks. CCS and RAILS will host training for Vernon Area and Waukegan staff in November. Both libraries will launch Find More Illinois in early December.

Innovative and Polaris

LX Starter

CCS is working with members to implement LX Starter notices, an enhanced notice format. Members have been assigned to 1 of 5 waves, with plans for all members to use LX Started by the end of October 2027. The most time-intensive part of implementation is designing each notice type, which members will do with support from CCS.

System Performance

The geofence was expanded to cover all servers open to the internet, including our training environment. CCS is still waiting for CloudFlare implementation, which should further mitigate bot traffic and related performance issues.

Member Engagement Analysis

The Member Engagement Analysis is complete, and each member has been assigned an engagement score based on activity in FY 2026. Overall, we are pleased to see a high level of engagement across our membership, with 1/3 of members scoring over 90% based on our rubric.

FY 2027 Goals

- Increase the number of library visits per quarter, prioritizing visits to libraries with engagement below average or no high touch services prior year.
- Redesign CCS Bookmark
- Increase Visibility of group decisions. Highlight group meeting notes, recordings, and outcomes in CCS News.
- Identify opportunities for customer service training for CCS staff.
- Consider technical group survey to identify opportunities to increase value and engagement
- Review and update technical group policies and bylaws. Determine whether updates to groups are needed to promote visibility and encourage attendance
- Update CCS logo and branding
- Begin website redesign project
- Develop asynchronous onboarding course that provides an overview of CCS's role and services.

CCS Rebrand and Website Project

CCS is beginning a rebranding and website development project. The effort is beginning this month with a search for a designer to partner on the rebrand and website visuals. The website will be developed in house in calendar year 2027. The request for proposals for brand design is available on the CCS website. Please feel free to share with potentially interested parties.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative (PLC)

PinCon

In August, the Pinnacle libraries came together to host PinCon - a joint staff in-service day bringing employees from all six member libraries together for a day of networking and professional development. Held at the Renaissance Center in Joliet, we had 314 library staff, plus vendors and presenters, for a full day of idea-sharing and networking.

Beyond the professional development and informational sessions, the event also gave staff the opportunity to connect with colleagues throughout the consortium. We're now looking to continue that moment through additional networking and training opportunities for staff.

Vega Discover

For the last several years, we've been development partners for the Vega Discover catalog. Our last requested feature to integrate InterLibrary Loan with OCLC was just released in October. Users can now search for materials and place ILL requests directly in Discover. Once the request is placed, existing integrations with Polaris take over.

We're now working on launching Discover to patrons next Spring, with a potential launch date in March 2027.

Strategic Plan

2026 marks the end of our current strategic plan. With the conclusion of this plan and some other changes on the horizon, this puts us in an interesting position to reflect on the last several

years and look ahead to the next. In January, consultant Amanda Standerfer will help guide a conversation about our priorities and vision for the future. We'll then continue these conversations internally to determine any new strategic directions and action items.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

Nothing to report.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

Environmental Scan

The first of these is completing an environment scan of the ILS market. We are currently in the second year of a 2+5-year contract with SirsiDynix. At the end of this year, we could choose to migrate to a new vendor or remain with SirsiDynix. After a conversation with Sirsi representatives we have decided that in all likelihood we will say with them for the rest of the 2+5 but refocus the environmental scan on where vendors are likely to be in 3 years' time with a special focus on the ILS, the public discovery layer, and any reporting module. The information gleaned would be used to help us prepare for a potential migration at the end of 2+5.

The Harmony Project

With that shift in thinking for the Environmental Scan, we approached Sirsi about planning for a migration from our current database to a new clean one which we hoped would enable to clear out 20 years of old gunk in the current database by just leaving it behind. Their advice was to focus on cleaning policies and other data elements out of our existing database instead as a cheaper and less disruptive alternative.

Because we were getting tired of the increasingly inaccurately named "Symphony Cleanup project which may or may not lead to a system migration" I came up with The Harmony Project as a catch all brand for our work to clarify rules and naming conventions, cleanup no longer needed data and standardize among our libraries where possible. Information on progress so far can be found here: https://support.librariesofrsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Harmony-presentation-2026-09-30.pdf

In developing the design for the elements of the new database we have followed these fundamental principles.

1. The design language must be system neutral
    - Examples are based on Symphony constraints, but the overall principles should apply in the event we migrate to a different vendor
2. Codes should be human readable
    - Codes should be designed consistently to allow RSA staff and others to easily interpret them
    - When abbreviating codes such as Library System Codes to fit digit constraints vowels are cut first as this leaves the abbreviated code human readable
3. Ensuring a future proof design where possible
    - Codes should be designed to allow for addition of library branches, new circulation rules, new item types, and so on

- RSA has learned through past experience that no design can be future proofed against a library changing its official name

Brief Bot: Bibliographic Data Clean up

As mentioned in my last report we have started working alongside SirsiDynix to build automated procedures to identify brief records in our database which can be merged with each other and then considered for transfer to full OCLC records. With approximately 58,000 brief records currently in WorkFlows (or about 5.5% of the approximately 1,054,000 total bibliographic records), RSA seeks to improve the bibliographic quality of our database to improve discoverability not just in WorkFlows but also for patrons in RSAcat.

The backlog of nearly 58,000 brief records would take the RSA Bibliographic Services Department approximately 30 years to upgrade to OCLC records with full bibliographic description, and that timeline would only be true if no new brief records were created. Because manually upgrading each of these brief records is impossible, RSA is working with SirsiDynix this summer to develop and conduct four phases of brief record cleanup.

Since the last report we have worked with Sirsi to build several stages of this process as automated routines are currently developing the rest. Again, referring to this as "The Automated Brief Record Clean Up Project" was becoming tiresome and so Brief Bot was born. Further details of how Brief Bot will work can be found here: https://support.librariesofrsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Brief-Bot-Flyer.pdf. Brief Bot himself was designed by our colleague Maria Ford.

Member Visits

As mentioned in earlier reports, RSA has a policy that we'll visit every RSA member and branch once every 18 months. December will mark the end of the first 18-month period, and we will indeed manage to visit all 167 active branches before the end of this year. In January we will start again with those libraries that received visits from bibliographic service the first time round scheduled to be visited by library services and vice versa.

- July – 10 in person visits
- August – 14 in person visits
- September – 20 in person visits
- October – 16 in person visits

Strategic Plan

RSA has started working on their next Strategic Plan. A survey of all staff at member libraries has started and focus group meetings are scheduled for the first week of November. A member summit will occur in the middle of February. We're looking forward to seeing what clues for RSA's future direction this will provide.

No-Transit Item Types

No-Transit Item Types are now live in ILS with 16 new item types having been created. Fondulac District Library has added nearly 400 items using these new item types into the database. Any no-transit item can be found simply by searching RSAcat for "for checkout and return only" which are required words in the brief record title. No-transit items can be no holds, local holds only, or open to anyone placing a hold on the item. But in all cases, the only library the patron can pick up and return the item to is the item owning branch library.

Additional Staffing

RSA is hiring with interviews in November
Bibliographic Services Specialist (to grow the department by another full cataloger) has been posted.
Library Services Manager (to co-manage the Library Services Department with James) has been posted.
Targeting 11 Jan 2027 as the start date for these two.
Executive Director – interview of Antony will be held at RSA's Board Meeting on November 5th. If successful, he would start after Kendal's retirement in June 2027.

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Official RFP search for ILS & analytics

The SWAN Board approved by unanimous vote at its June meeting to begin a search for an ILS and analytics platform. The timing of the approval allowed the SWAN management team to use the 2026 ALA Conference for meetings with vendors, including the current ILS and analytics provider SirsiDynix. We estimate that the RFP process will take about a full year to complete, which will include software demonstrations and membership involvement. SWAN will not be seeking replacement solutions for Aspen Discover and other third-party solutions such as MessageBee.
SWAN formed the ILS Search Committee with SWAN board has approving the makeup of the group. We had an overwhelming response to our call for volunteers from many talented member staff. The selection process was not easy, and we are grateful to all who put their names forward. Our final committee consists of five member staff and five SWAN staff. The Committee met three times to review the draft RFP document created by SWAN staff.
The RFP document was issued on October 14, 2026. The document, timeline, and aggregated news posts are available on the SWAN webpage below.
https://swanlibraries.net/ils-search/for-vendors
The deadline for responding to the RFP is Friday, November 20, 2026.

Scan & Go pilot: SWAN Libraries + app feature



Scan & Go, the self-check feature in the app, will go live as a public beta for Downers Grove Public Library and Lansing Public Library on November 2, 2026. Any patrons logged in to Downers Grove or Lansing instances of the app will be able to use Scan & Go.
Scan & Go allows patrons to check out items through the SWAN Libraries + app. Instructions for patrons will be available in our catalog help at the start of the beta period.
In addition, the SWAN Libraries + app that is powered by LIDA has undergone significant improvements for its loading speed with the 26.08 release in August. The underlying design system for the app has been updated with the 26.10 release, which improves performance and also lays the groundwork for custom app themes. In addition, this release includes several accessibility fixes. We expect to be able to roll out custom themes for library apps sometime in 2027.

AspenCon 2026

SWAN Bibliographic Services Consultant Lucas McKeever presented at the annual Aspen Discovery conference in Oklahoma City, “Aspen's Adventures in Series-land: Enabling the Series Module.” SWAN was heavily involved with the development of the management feature of series pages in Aspen, and Lucas presented how the feature allowed SWAN to move from a third-party solution provided by EBSCO Novelist Select.
Lucas and SWAN User Experience Manager Tara Wood participated on a panel discussion “The Best Features of Aspen You Aren't Using.”

Manga cleanup

With Aspen having a format filter for Manga, SWAN’s goal is for this popular material type to be much more easily browsed in the public catalog. While reviewing this format, SWAN found that many items within the same series were assigned different formats, some Manga and many Graphic novel. Aspen is coded to assign the format of Manga if the bib record in WorkFlows contains a 655 genre heading that contains the word "Manga." The genre heading "Manga" was only approved as an authorized heading in 2022, with a few other sub genres receiving an authorized status in 2023 and 2024. Due to these headings not being used widely while a majority of our Manga collections were cataloged, we performed a cleanup project to make this format filter work as expected for patrons and staff alike.
Before the project began, the number of bib records with the Manga format assigned in Aspen was 5,522. After the project, the total number is 12,639.

Partial payments

Beginning September 30, 2026, patrons are now able to pay partial payments of fines and bills through the SWAN online catalog and app. For example, if you were billed $20 for a lost item, you could choose to pay $5 installments towards the total bill. Currently, you would have to pay the full $20 bill.

This is a helpful service for patrons to give them more options for paying fines and fees. SWAN turned this feature on by default for all libraries and all payment platforms (PayPal, Stripe, etc.), with the opportunity for a library to opt-out by request.

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Consortial Report: Illinois Heartland Library System SHARE

November 9, 2026

Sharing Heartland's Available Resources Equally (SHARE)

Polaris Upgrade

Polaris was successfully upgraded to version 8.1 at the end of July with minimal downtime.

Transition to Leap

SHARE staff continue to assist member libraries in the transition to Polaris Leap from Polaris Staff Client. Trainings are being held virtually, as well as at member libraries throughout our service area. While no official end date for access to Polaris Staff Client has been set, we are highly encouraging library staff to implement Leap into their daily workflows sooner rather than later.

Tape Recommendations

SHARE staff spent several weeks evaluating tape options for member libraries to develop a recommendation following 3M's discontinuation of removable tape. Tape is used less now in the consortium due to the adoption of three Automatic Material Handling systems across the IHLS hubs, however there are still instances where it is needed. The final recommendation provided by SHARE staff is highlighter tape. This tape is easily removable, does very little, if any damage, fits on standard tape dispensers, and is comparable in price to the original removable tape.

Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC)

Dr. Pamela Thomas, head of the CMC, will officially retire November 30, 2026. Her replacement, Josh Zink, has been hired and is currently working alongside her to learn the ins and outs of the CMC.



Josh comes to the Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) from the Washington University Law Library, with previous experience at SHARE, the Ferguson Public Library, and Greenville University, where he first discovered a love of cataloging. He spends his free time wrangling his children (2) and cats (4), playing his guitar badly, and working through a backlog of video games and books that seems to get longer faster than it gets shorter.