



# 2026 Annual Report

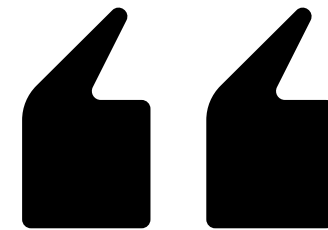


photo credit: Chicago Tribune



Monica Harris, RAILS Executive Director

# Dear Readers,



If I could choose one word to summarize 2025, it would be **collaborative**. One of the most rewarding aspects of leading RAILS is the opportunity to connect with the libraries we serve and witness the remarkable work happening across our membership.

This report celebrates our shared accomplishments and demonstrates how our mission, 'We Connect Libraries,' continues to guide our strategic path. The RAILS Board and staff are so proud to support your institutions and the diverse communities you serve. We remain grateful for the opportunity to innovate and collaborate with you every day.



# We Connect Libraries



# Our Board



## At-Large Representatives

**Amanda Kowalcze**  
Frankfort Public Library District

**Megan Gove**  
Talcott Free Library District

**Emily Porter**  
OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center

## Academic Representative

**Gwen Gregory**  
Northern Illinois University

## Specialized Representative

**Catherine Yanikoski**  
Engineering Systems, Inc.

## School Representative

**Monica Caldicott**  
Community High School District 128

## Public Library Trustee Representatives

**Jean Carroll**  
Thomas Ford Memorial Library

**Jennifer Cutshall**  
Homewood Public Library  
District

**Roberta Parks**  
Peoria Public Library

**Alex Vancina**  
New Lenox Public Library  
District

**Carolyn Sennett**  
Wilmette Public Library  
District

**Karen Voitik**  
Shorewood-Troy Public  
Library District

**Jennifer Hovanec**  
Villa Park Public Library

**Ron Holohan**  
Dunlap Public Library District



**6** new members

**1,206**  
libraries

**552** school

**412** public

**131** special

**111** academic

Hill Correctional Center - Galesburg, IL  
LEARN John & Kathy Schreiber - Waukegan, IL  
SAE Institute - Chicago, IL  
Shirland CCSD #134 - Shirland, IL  
St. Anne Parish School - Barrington, IL  
Wallace Township Library - Ottawa, IL

# The Big Three in 2025



## IMLS Advocacy

In **March 2025**, an Executive Order reduced funding and staff for the Institute of Museum and Library Services. RAILS responded with coordinated advocacy, media outreach, and the Numbers That Count campaign.

## Baker & Taylor Closure

In **October 2025**, Baker & Taylor announced plans to wind down operations. RAILS supported libraries with vendor comparison assistance while transitioning more than 800 eRead Illinois libraries to The Palace Project.

## RSA Independence

On **January 1, 2026**, Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA) became an independent employer after years of planning with RAILS. The transition aligns RSA with other regional consortia while maintaining a strong partnership.

# Cataloging

“ iCAMP ”

This was a new opportunity to take more of a leadership role in my career. **I feel more confident in my cataloging skills** because I have been able to teach others through this program.

- participant reflection ””

90%

of participants reported boosted cataloging confidence

46

hours of cataloging training


1K

items cataloged via World Language Cataloging Service



 **\$98K+**

awarded to 24 libraries with My Library Is... Grant funds

 **10K+**

downloads of the "Can't Shelve This" podcast

 **302K+**

RAILS E-News opens

 **12.9K+**

email list subscribers

 **311**

items sold in the RAILS online store

 **201**

Illinois School Library Workers Symposium participants

# Comms

# Consulting

Our top 3 call topics in 2025



Non-residents



Library Boards



Training Recs

**37.5%**

increase in registrations  
across all RAILS CE events

# Continuing Education





I'm pretty new to libraries but it **felt nice to see people who were in all different types of roles** so it was not intimidating to me. I felt comfortable speaking my mind and didn't feel out of place.

- Catalyst participant reflection





# Data

Resource  
Sharing  
Digital Map

**2K+**

views within the  
first four days

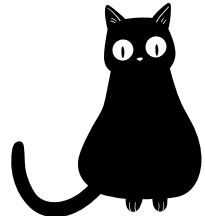


**8.9K**

data dashboard  
views

# LIBRARIES COUNT

RAILS DATA CONFERENCE

 **119**  
attendees

 **9**  
sessions

**98%**

of survey respondents  
said they would be  
interested in attending  
Libraries Count again



# Deals & Discounts

We handle the research, purchasing, and invoicing.  
**Your library saves money.**



**\$2.5M**

in savings for  
libraries

**421**

participating  
libraries

**160+**

vendor products

# Delivery

## Our Hubs

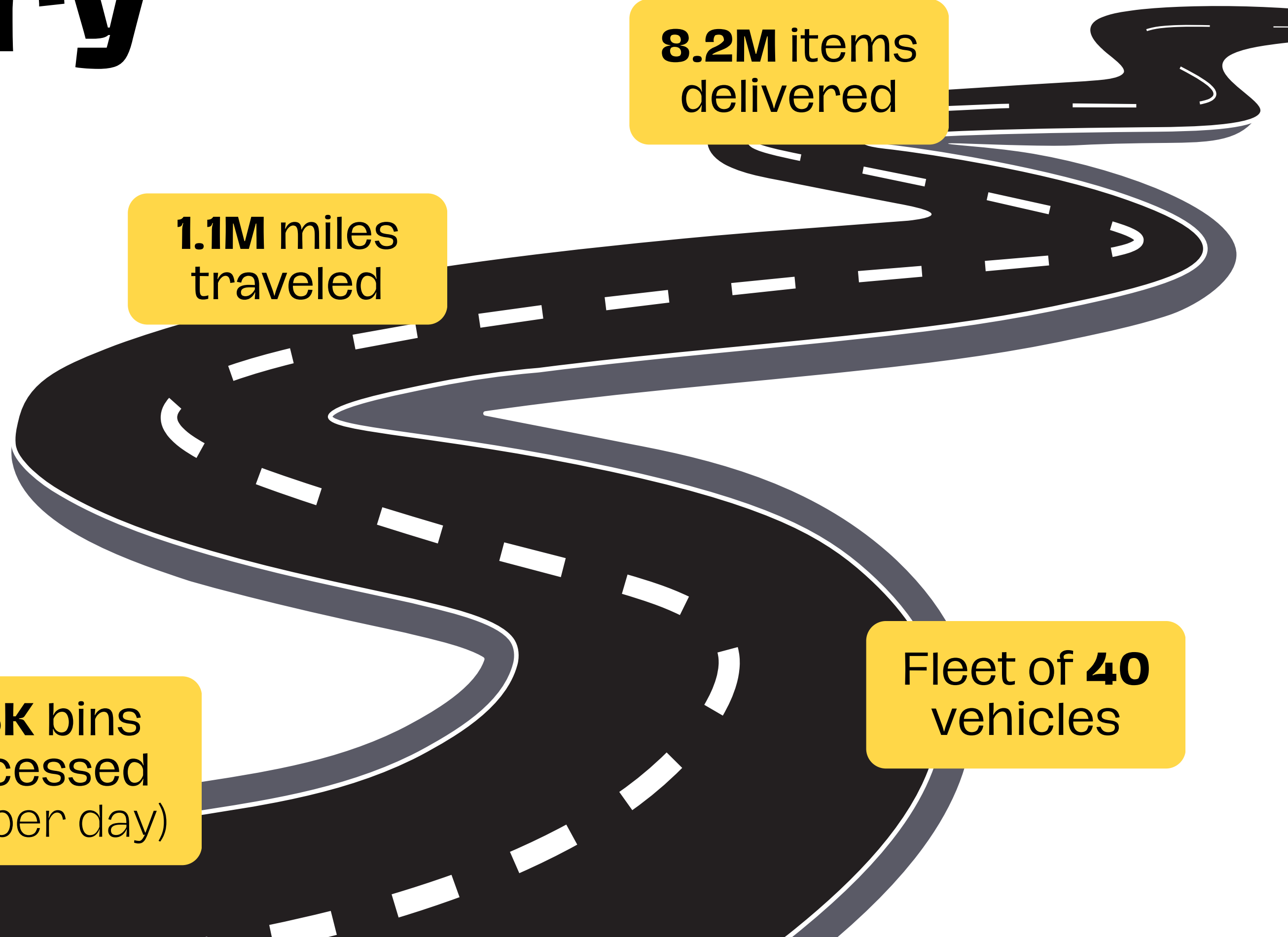
Bolingbrook  
Burr Ridge  
Coal Valley  
East Peoria  
Rockford

**1.1M** miles  
traveled

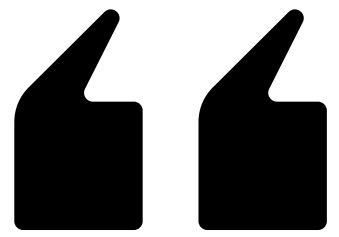
**8.2M** items  
delivered

**326K** bins  
processed  
(1.3K per day)

Fleet of **40**  
vehicles



# Delivery Diary



One time, I was having a bad day. A child at a remote library who often gets a lot of books said to me, **'Thanks for bringing me all the books, Mister.'** That really brightened up the next several weeks for me. Those moments, like bringing books to rural libraries, make the job pretty cool because we're working for the people.

- Tele Kanzaki, RAILS Delivery Driver



# E-Content



**22.5K**

collection views

**169**

self-published  
e-books added

**420K+**

combined checkouts from  
Boundless & The Palace Project

**eReadIllinois**



**43K+**  
reservations



“My husband is currently unemployed and we are on a strict budget. **We would not have been able to visit the Morton Arboretum if it wasn't for the Explore More pass.** We found the arboretum beautiful and it was a much needed stress relief.”

- 2025 Explore More Illinois user

# Find More Illinois



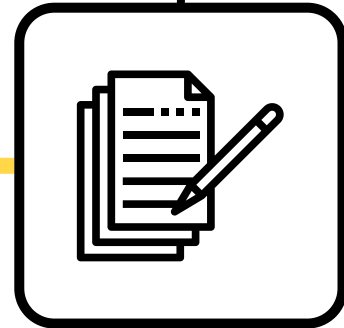
**9M**  
items in  
shared catalog

Launched **lender-only program** for  
academic libraries

**16.2K**  
transactions

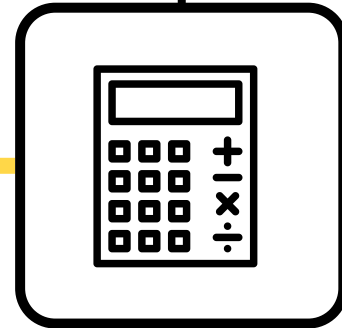
# Support Services

## Administration



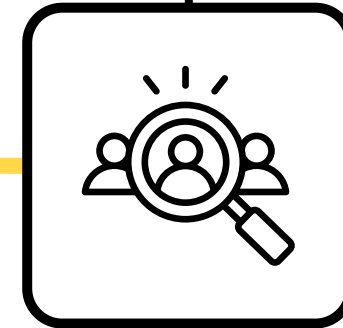
Continued providing high-quality member and staff support

## Finance



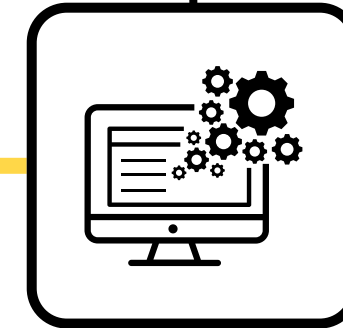
transitioned auditors

## Human Resources



Updated performance discussion platform

## IT



Provided tech solutions for new spaces in Rockford and Bolingbrook



# Technology

**\$2.25M**  
awarded in LLSAP Grants

Cooperative Computer Services  
Pinnacle Library Cooperative  
PrairieCat  
Resource Sharing Alliance  
Rock River Library Consortium  
SWAN Library Services

**\$850K**

received for Cook County Digital  
Navigator Network project

new partnership




**COOK COUNTY**  
**DIGITAL EQUITY**



**\$220.8K**

awarded in Catalog  
Membership Grants



We're thrilled to be joining CCS. This grant opportunity from RAILS made it much easier for us to **move forward with a decision we knew would benefit our community**. We truly appreciate RAILS' support and look forward to being connected with all of the outstanding libraries in CCS.

- grant recipient Jack Bower,  
Rolling Meadows Library

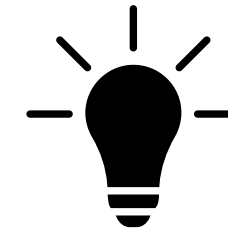


# What's coming in

# 2026



Library  
Demographic  
Profiles



RAILS  
Academy



Strategic  
Planning



Cook County Digital  
Navigator Network



Find More Illinois &  
Explore More Illinois  
dashboards

# connect with Us



● railslibraries.org

● 630.734.5000

● communications@railslibraries.org

● @railslibraries