



2025 Annual Report

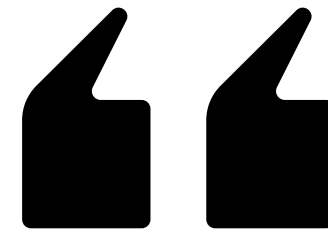


photo credit: Chicago Tribune



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



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

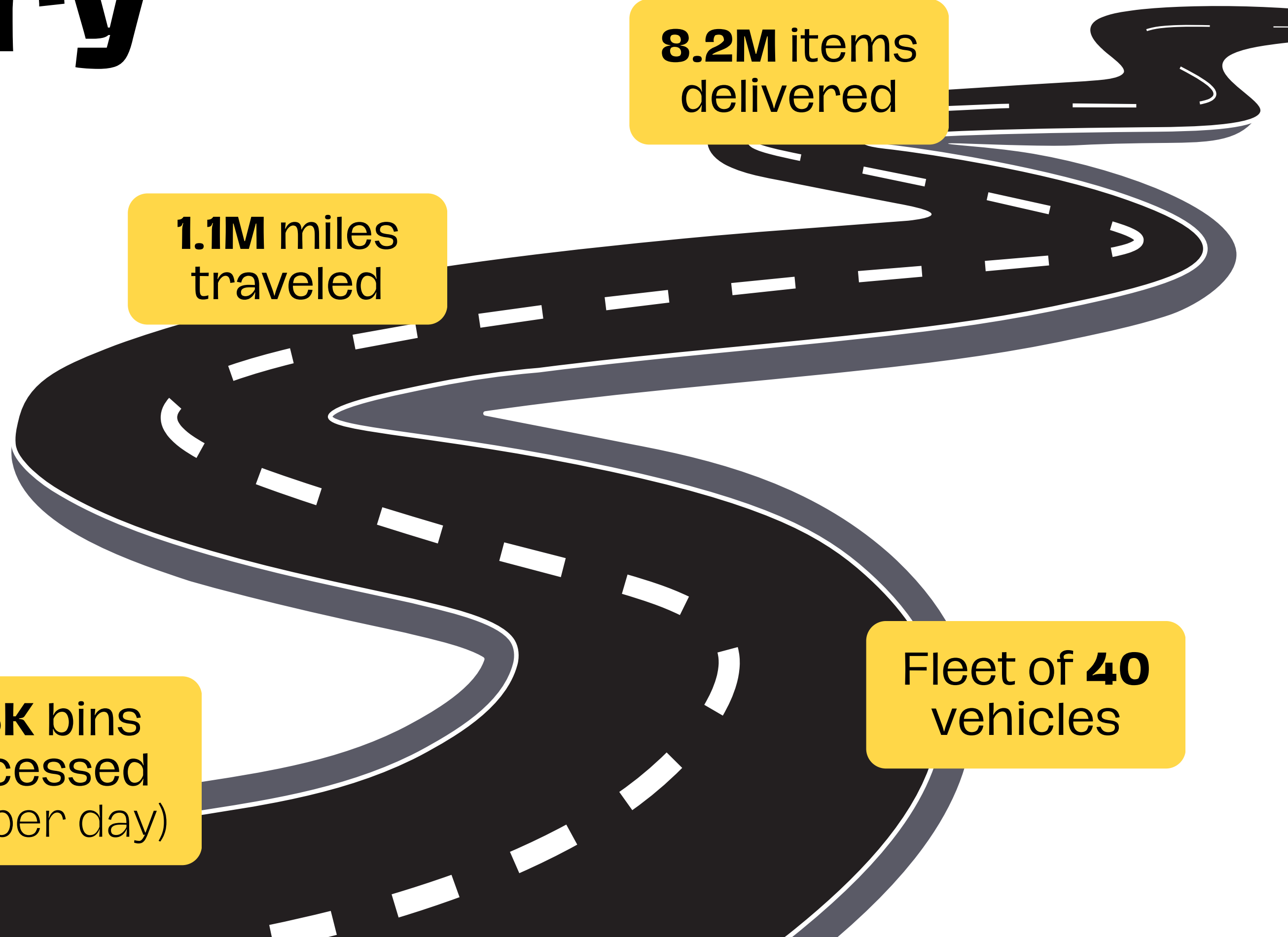
Bolingbrook
Burr Ridge
Coal Valley
East Peoria
Rockford

1.1M miles
traveled

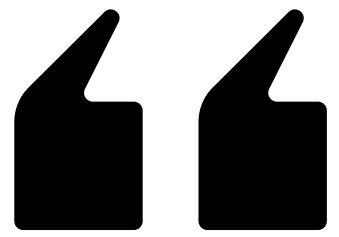
8.2M items
delivered

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

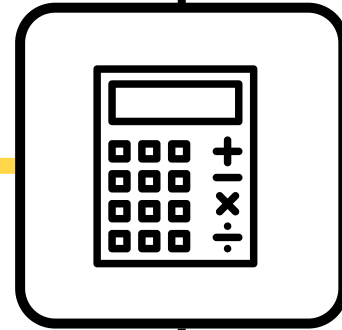
Support Services

Administration



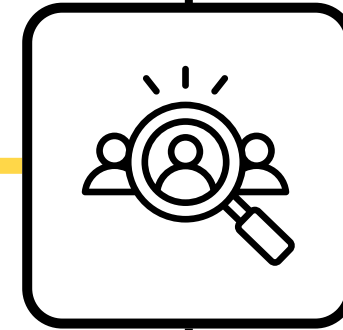
Continued providing high-quality member and staff support

Finance



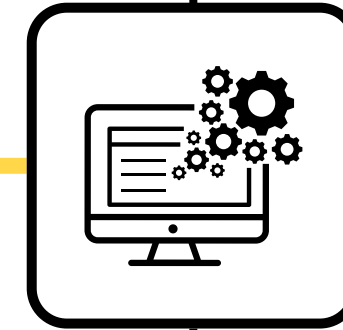
transitioned auditors

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

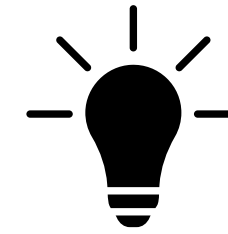


What's coming in

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