125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge IL 60527
630.734.5000
Fax: 630.734.5050
railslibraries.org

RAILS Report – Consortia Committee

RAILS is 15! Please Share Your Thoughts

As we continue to celebrate RAILS's 15th Anniversary, we're asking our members and partners to share thoughts on these prompts in our Anniversary Padlet:

- Where were you in 2011?
- How does RAILS impact you today?
- What do you hope to see from RAILS in the next 15 years?

Resource Sharing Committee Update

The committee met on September 14, 2026. Recent developments in the Find More Illinois program were highlighted, including the addition of UIC Health Sciences Libraries, a new program logo and color scheme, and continued success with the Academic Library Lender-Only Pilot. The program aims to reach at least 10 million items and is exploring additional library participation and possible resource sharing with Wisconsin. The committee also discussed resource sharing policies and practices regarding reciprocal borrowers, lost materials, reimbursement, and restrictions on high-demand items. The next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2026.

Universal Service Committee Update

The Committee met on October 2, 2026. Members received an overview of universal library service, including its history in Illinois, recent legislation supporting access for unserved residents, statewide database access, non-resident library card fees, community college outreach, and efforts to identify public library service status in real estate listings. The committee also began reviewing its 2024 Universal Service Plan, which will continue at its next meeting on December 4, 2026.

RAILS Member Update on November 12

RAILS' next Member Update is on Thursday, November 12. Registration is available on L2, and the agenda will be posted once finalized.

RAILS Libraries Connect Grant Now Accepting Applications

The 2027 RAILS Libraries Connect Grant, formerly known as the My Library Is... Grant, is accepting applications through February 2, 2027, for awards of up to $5,000. Retaining the spirit and structure of the original program, these grants help RAILS member libraries of all types tell their story. Detailed guidelines and forms can be found on the Libraries Connect grant page.

Anatomy of a Public Library Data Dashboard

The new Anatomy of a Public Library Data Dashboard, created by former RAILS Data Analysis Intern Yolanda Everson, showcases demographic data from Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR) and

125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge IL 60527
630.734.5000
Fax: 630.734.5050
railslibraries.org

American Community Survey. Other neat features include a county-level library comparison tool and a peer library comparison based on service population and operating expenditures.

RAILS Announces First-Ever Virtual Vendor Fair

RAILS will host a virtual vendor event on January 28, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Library workers from all library types and in any position are invited to learn more about resources, products, and services from over 20 of our partners. There will be live sessions and time for Q&A, and recordings will be available to registrants.

Find More Illinois News

Academic Library Pilot Celebrates One Year

June marked the first anniversary of the Find More Illinois Academic Library Lender-Only Pilot. RAILS heard from academic libraries about their interest in sharing their collections with the broader library community, and in response, RAILS developed this pilot with input from academic libraries. Over the past year, the pilot has made a meaningful impact, demonstrating the value of collaboration between all types of libraries.

RAILS Announces New Branding for Find More Illinois

Find More Illinois has grown to almost 100 participating libraries, providing access to more than 9 million items through one platform. This rebrand marks an exciting next step for the program as it continues to grow and welcomes libraries of all types to participate. See more at www.findmoreillinois.org.

Cataloging Support Resources

iCAMP Bonfire: Online Office Hours for Library Catalogers

Bonfire is an opportunity for library catalogers of any experience level to connect with each other, ask questions, and share ideas. All are welcome to join in on the third Wednesday of each month, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Each session features an expert cataloger who shares insights and advice on a topic related to their area of specialty. Find more information and registration links on the RAILS website. This is a supplementary resource of the Illinois Cataloging Mentorship Program (iCAMP), but participation in iCAMP is not required.

Updated Cataloging Guidance Documents Now Available

RAILS has updated two key cataloging guidance documents originally developed by the Consortial Cataloging Working Group, in collaboration with LLSAP cataloging staff, to reflect current cataloging practices and community input.

125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge IL 60527
630.734.5000
Fax: 630.734.5050
railslibraries.org

School Library News

2026-2027 SLATE Census is Open

The SLATE Census is now open through February 28 to gather important information about the status of school libraries, including staff, collections, and financial support. Every Illinois school is invited to participate, even if it doesn't have an active library program. For more information about SLATE, visit the RAILS website.

Advocacy Toolkit for School Libraries

The School Library Advocacy Toolkit from the Illinois Partnership for School Libraries provides resources and information to support school library workers in advocating for their library.

Statement of Support for School Libraries and School Librarians

The RAILS Board has adopted an updated Statement of Support for School Libraries and School Librarians, which is provided to media when RAILS is asked about its position on school library staff. The statement incorporates some of the language and ideas from Illinois Heartland Library System's recent resolution in support of school libraries. These statements and other resources are found on the RAILS School Library Advocacy page.

"The Good, the Bot, and the Ugly": AI & Learning on Can't Shelve This, Episode 3.3

Guest Emily Flach (Learning Technology Center) joined Janette & Leah on Can't Shelve This to discuss AI's growing presence in schools - from literacy and student privacy to research and critical thinking - and explore how we can keep learning human-centered in an increasingly AI-powered world.

Illinois Heartland Library System Announces Statewide Laptop Lending to Libraries

Anticipated to begin circulating November 15, 2026, the Illinois Laptop Lending Program includes more than 500 laptop kits, plus projectors and OWL video conferencing equipment. Public libraries across Illinois can request temporary or long-term loans to support community programming, intended for in-library use or library-managed outreach. Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) is administering this statewide initiative of the Illinois Office of Broadband and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity. Program information can be found at laptopsforlibraries.com; RAILS is collaborating with IHLS on upcoming promotion.

Public Library Association (PLA) Library Technology Survey

RAILS encourages all public libraries to complete PLA's 2026 Technology Survey by December 15th. Data includes technology infrastructures, programming, funding streams, and emerging A.I.-related practices. When this survey was last collected in 2023, Illinois' response rate was 14.6%, compared with top respondent states Maryland (56%), Washington (37.1%), and California (33.2%). An improved response rate would make PLA's analysis even more useful to Illinois libraries.