REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

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DATE: March 23, 2026

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Monica Harris, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Cataloging Standards Update

At its March meeting, the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee received a presentation from an ALA Core SAC Working Group on $v Retention regarding proposed changes to cataloging practices, specifically the removal of certain form subdivisions from subject headings. These subdivisions play an important role in how library materials are organized and discovered by users. The Working Group is advocating for the retention of these subdivisions, emphasizing their value in supporting clear and consistent access to library collections. If you'd like to read the full report of the Working Group you may do so here, and a list of other organizations who have agreed to endorse can be viewed in Appendix D.

The Advocacy Committee shares these concerns and recommends that the RAILS Board of Directors endorse the Working Group's position. Removing these subdivisions could negatively impact library users across RAILS by making materials less discoverable, particularly for those relying on precise searches to find specific formats or types of content. Maintaining intuitive access points is critical to ensuring a positive and equitable user experience, and this aim fits within the framework of our strategic plan which charges RAILS to provide leadership for our member libraries in providing equitable and inclusive services.

While some libraries may have the capacity to manually reintroduce this cataloging information to records, smaller libraries throughout RAILS may lack the staffing, time, or cataloging expertise to do so. This creates a potential equity issue, where larger or better-resourced libraries are better positioned to preserve high-quality access to their collections, while others may fall behind. For these reasons, the Advocacy Committee urges the Board to support efforts to retain these subdivisions as part of a user-centered approach to cataloging.

We look forward to sharing more information with the board at our March meeting.