

What are the differences?

RAILS is a regional library system, a government agency that provides services to libraries in the northern and west-central areas of the state of Illinois.

RAILS is one of three state-funded regional library agencies in Illinois (the other two are the Illinois Heartland Library System and Chicago Public Library).

Organization Type



RSA is a library automation consortium. Effective July 1st, 2024, it will become a government agency. It will continue to provide shared ILS services to libraries in central and west central Illinois.

RSA is one of six LLSAP (Local Library System Automation Project) consortia which receive grant support from RAILS.

RAILS is governed by a 12-member board, elected by member libraries.

Governance



RSA is governed by a 12-member board, made up of Directors and Supervisors from RSA libraries. They are elected by RSA member libraries.

RAILS is a multitype library system serving more than 1,250 libraries, including academic, public, school, and specialized libraries.

Membership



RSA is a multitype library automation consortium serving 142 member libraries at 188 sites, including academic, public, school, and specialized libraries.

All member libraries must comply with requirements as defined by Administrative Code Rules, Illinois Library System Act ([23 Ill.Admin. Code 3030.200](#)).

Membership Requirements



All members must sign the IGA establishing RSA, and abide by the bylaws and policies adopted by the RSA Board of Directors. They must also pay applicable membership dues and optional per-library service fees.

RAILS receives most of its budget through the Illinois State Library, a part of the Illinois Secretary of State's Office.

Funding



RSA receives funding from its member libraries and from the annual RAILS LLSAP Support Grant.

RAILS members do not pay dues to be part of the system.

Dues



RSA members pay annual fees to be part of the consortium. Fees are used to pay staff, automation vendors, for database services, and other associated fees.

RAILS has around 80 staff members based out of five locations around northern Illinois. Around half of RAILS' staff members are involved with interlibrary loan delivery services.

Staff



RSA has 12 staff members currently employed by RAILS through the LLSAP Support Grant agreement. RSA will begin employing staff directly starting in July 2025.

BENEFITS

RAILS provides services such as:

Delivery of interlibrary loan materials – System members can get interlibrary loan materials delivered to and from any other Illinois library for free. This includes books, movies, music, and more.

Continuing education – RAILS holds frequent low cost/no cost webinars and workshops specifically on topics related to libraries (i.e. library programming, collection development, increasing circulation). Most events are archived and available for watching at any time.

Grants – RAILS offers a number of grants for members including: 1) a Continuing Education Event Grant, which allows members to host their own professional development at no cost, 2) a My Library Is... Grant which helps fund programs that promote library services like videos, social media, infographics, and more.

Deals & discounts – RAILS offers members a number of cooperative purchasing programs and vendor discounts at no cost.

Support for e-books – Any system member can participate in a fee-based program called eRead Illinois which offers affordable access to Baker & Taylor's Boundless platform.

Email lists & networking groups – Members also enjoy the opportunity to connect and discussion new ideas and best practices. Any staff from any library can join one of our 40+ email lists or meet up with a networking group in their area.

RSA provides services such as:

- In person and online training
- In person and online library visits
- Automation system related consulting
- General automation system troubleshooting and support
- System-wide holds between members for +90% of all consortia holdings
- Original and Copy Cataloging support
- Circulation and holds support
- Database editing and cleanup support
- Statistical reports
- Notice reports for patrons
- Detailed documentation for the shared ILS
- Group purchases for e-books
- Online Catalogs for patrons
- Direct access to e-books, advanced author/series/title information, access to 55+ million online articles and more as part of RSA membership
- Opportunities for networking and peer learning
- Governance and leadership opportunities

For a full listing of all RSA products and services, please visit the RSA support site at <https://support.librariesofrsa.org> or email the RSA Help Desk at help@rsanfp.org.

OTHER KEY FACTS:

RAILS provides intra-library delivery. 95% of items moving between RSA members are from other RSA member libraries. Without RSA's holds volume, your library may not qualify for regular delivery.

All RSA members must be RAILS members. Many RAILS members are not RSA members.

RSA is an LLSAP (Local Library System Automation Project) more generally referred to as a library automation consortium. Effective July 1, 2024, it will become a government agency. RSA will continue to provide shared ILS services to libraries in central and west central Illinois.

RSA receives grant support from RAILS.

In the past, other shared catalog consortia – including PrairieCat and SWAN – have undertaken the same process to transition away from being staffed with RAILS employees.

All library staff in affiliated libraries and trustees in affiliated public libraries can have access to [Library Learning \(L2\)](#), the membership directory and event calendar for libraries.