

Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) Talking Points May 2019

Below are some talking points to use when talking to library users and others about RAILS and the programs and services that are available to them through the system. There will likely never be a time when it will be possible to cover all of these points in one conversation. Different points will work in different situations and it is always best to choose the topic that you think will be of greatest interest to the person you are speaking with.

You can also “mix and match” these talking points. Instead of memorizing the different points word-for-word, it may be more helpful to pick a point or two that particularly resonates with you or to combine separate elements from different points into a new talking point. You do not have to say a lot. The important thing is to feel comfortable in what you are saying and to get the conversation started.

About RAILS (General Information)

- RAILS is one of three library systems in Illinois. RAILS offers a number of important services to approximately 4,000 individual library buildings in a 27,000 square mile area. Together these libraries serve over 8 million Illinois residents of all ages. RAILS also offers additional services that are available to every Illinois resident.
- RAILS’ main mission is to help libraries to be the best they can be and to provide the best possible service to their customers/communities. No one library is able to provide everything their users need. RAILS optimizes the use of tax dollars by helping libraries to collaborate and share their resources with each other.
- RAILS offers a number of services for every type of library (academic, public, school, and special). You are probably familiar with public libraries and may also know that there are libraries in colleges, universities, and elementary and high schools. Many people don’t know about “special” libraries, which are found in law firms, hospitals, museums, and other business and nonprofit organizations. RAILS serves them all!

Expanding Your Library Through Resource Sharing

Shared Library Catalogs

- It used to be that every library had a separate catalog that only included the items in that library’s collection. RAILS provides support for shared online catalogs, where a number of libraries join together to make their materials available through one catalog. This means library users can find out what hundreds of other libraries own in one search, and they can make that search at their convenience—anytime and anywhere.
- RAILS’ Find More Illinois catalog provides access to even more resources from even more libraries by making it possible to search many different shared online catalogs, as well as catalogs from individual libraries.

Delivery

- Once a library user finds an item they need in an online shared catalog or in Find More Illinois, they don’t have to travel miles to pick it up. They can request that it be delivered to their home library via the RAILS delivery service. RAILS delivers over 9 million items per year between Illinois

libraries, at a cost of approximately 31 cents per item. You will not find another high-quality delivery service that comes anywhere close to that low cost!

E-Books/E-Resources

BiblioBoard

- Through RAILS' partnership with BiblioBoard, any Illinois resident has access to thousands of e-resources free of charge and without needing a login or library card. Items on the BiblioBoard platform have no holds or waiting for titles, and can be read by one or 100 people at the same time. Offerings include popular titles, open educational resources (OERs) for students, and a wide variety of e-books and other materials for all ages.
- BiblioBoard is home to dozens of classic novels, including works of American, British, and world literature. For example, the Recovering the Classics collection features a wide range of public-domain classics for both children and adults, with reimaged, contemporary cover art that will appeal to students.
- RAILS' partnership with BiblioBoard provides access to hundreds of open educational resource materials (OERs) in one place. All are available for unlimited use and download, making the OER collection the perfect place to go for educational research or last-minute homework help. And you don't need a login or library card.
- RAILS' BiblioBoard offerings include a variety of Common Core collections covering a wide range of topics, including literature, philosophy, history, geography, and science. Each collection contains corresponding middle and high school common core guides.
- Illinois residents can also use RAILS' BiblioBoard offerings when they travel out-of-state by creating a login before they go. Creating a login lets them save favorites, create bookmarks, download content, and more. To create a login, go to library.biblioboard.com and click "menu" in the upper left corner. You'll see a blue "sign in" button and below it a clickable rectangle with "Don't have a profile? Create Yours Now!"
- The unique selection of independent and self-published titles, classics, and additional resources make RAILS' BiblioBoard offerings a fantastic resources for book clubs. The best part is that everything on BiblioBoard can be read by multiple users at the same time, meaning no holds and no waiting for titles to become available. Readers don't even need to belong to the same library and they don't even need a library card.

eRead Illinois

- The eRead Illinois statewide e-book collection includes Baker & Taylor's Axis 360 platform for Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) members and Illinois Heartland Library System non-SHARE members. RAILS greatly subsidizes costs and negotiates much better pricing than any one library could on its own.
- eRead Illinois provides very affordable access to over 42,000 e-books and e-audiobooks. About 440 libraries currently participate in eRead Illinois.
- eRead Illinois includes a large collection of e-audiobooks for commuters and those on the go.
- RAILS maintains a low holds ration for items in the eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection. This means that for every four holds on an item, RAILS purchases an additional copy. Copies are added on a weekly basis. This keeps wait times down and helps get popular content into the hands of library users much faster.

Explore More Illinois

- Explore More Illinois is a new online cultural pass program that provides discounts at museums, visual and performing arts centers, park districts, and more across Illinois.
- The program works via the websites of participating libraries. Anyone with a library card from a participating library can take advantage of free/discounted admission and other deals from a variety of Illinois cultural attractions.
- The program started on April 1, 2019 with about 115 libraries and 25 attractions participating. RAILS will add libraries and attractions on an ongoing basis.
- RAILS has made this program available to our member libraries, and there is no cost for library patrons from participating RAILS libraries to take advantage of this program.
- Explore More Illinois differs from other existing pass programs. It is very easy to use anytime 24/7 because everything is done online. You don't have to go to the library to use it and you don't need a physical pass. You just need your library card number.

More Benefits to Libraries

Continuing Education for Library Staff

- RAILS offers continuing education for library staff to help them provide the best possible service to their customers. Last year, we offered 307 events at 44 unique locations, including a wide variety of online webinars. Over 4,000 library staff members registered for these events.
- RAILS provides a broad range of training on topics ranging from basic skills to new technologies and other innovative services. This training helps libraries remain relevant to the customers/communities they serve. RAILS CE is offered at no charge to libraries through their membership in the system. If every individual library had to seek out the training their staff needed on their own, the costs and the number of hours spent to find CE to fill all of their needs would be astronomical.
- RAILS CE helps library staff to navigate an ever-changing world and to respond to a variety of customers, all with differing needs. Library customers include children, adults, students, job-seekers, businesspeople, homeless populations, non-English speaking people, people who are not able to read or write, and more. The library is the only place where many of these people can turn to find the information they need and to have someone help them find the best information.
- RAILS CE also helps libraries deal with issues such as the opioid crisis and helping people to decipher "fake news." Libraries will also be major players in ensuring that Illinois has as accurate a count as possible in the 2020 Census. RAILS will help them fill that role as well.

Continuing Education for Library Trustees

- RAILS offers a variety of training opportunities for library trustees. Since the library board is the governing body of the library, the training RAILS offers to trustees results in better library service for Illinois taxpayers.

Discounts

- RAILS uses economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for our member libraries so they can offer more resources to their customers than they would be able to afford on their own

- RAILS negotiates with library service providers and vendors to provide discounts on a wide variety of products and services that are beneficial to our libraries. This includes discounts on electronic resources that library customers can use at home. The cost for a single library to offer all of these products/services would be extremely high. Because of RAILS' collective purchasing power and influence, libraries can purchase these products/services at very low cost.

Networking Opportunities

- RAILS offers staff from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) a variety of opportunities to share best practices, knowledge and expertise, and to develop innovative solutions to common issues and challenges. There is no need for libraries to recreate the wheel as long as RAILS is around!

Underserved/Unserved/Reciprocal Borrowing

- RAILS takes a leadership role in ensuring that library service is readily available to all Illinois residents, no matter what their income, ethnic background, or where they live.
- Because of RAILS, Illinois residents can use their public library card at almost any Illinois public library they choose to visit.