

RAILS E-Content Strategy

RAILS HISTORY of e-content

Illinois library systems have an incredible history of resource sharing.

It began with the formation of library systems in 1966 and continued with the then innovative sharing of online catalogs across libraries to ensure Illinois residents had access to an expansive selection of books and information beyond their library's walls.

That tradition has continued in the digital age when in 2013, the Illinois Secretary of State and Illinois State Library awarded a \$985,219 grant to the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) and the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) for the "*E-books for Illinois*" Program, named ***eRead Illinois***.

The eRead Illinois program focuses on three key goals:

- Expanding access to e-books for Illinois residents
- Training on e-books for libraries to better serve their communities
- Exploring further opportunities for increasing access to e-books through collaboration with Illinois authors, libraries, publishers, and other organizations

The grant program supported IHLS libraries in the SHARE catalog joining the Cloud Library group and RAILS libraries and non-SHARE IHLS libraries joining the Baker & Taylor Axis 360 group. The grant program ended in May 2015 but is sustained through the member fees that are assessed for participation. To date the eRead Illinois Axis 360 program serves over 400 libraries across Illinois.

The goals of the eRead Illinois program have given RAILS the opportunity to continue expanding access to e-content for Illinois residents.

Our initial research into exploring further opportunities to increase access led us to the conclusion that it is critical that libraries work across industries that serve the reader to expand the access to e-content for Illinois residents through partnership across the reading ecosystem. To our knowledge, many of the models for libraries to deliver e-content have not been developed or tested in collaboration with libraries. RAILS e-content strategy now focuses on building on the original eRead Illinois goals.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The vision is to position libraries as THE source for all types of quality e-content and RAILS as the lead in research, development and implementation of innovation in e-content delivery for libraries.

THE CHALLENGE

A Pew study stated that less than 40% of the public is aware that public libraries even have e-books.

There are a number of challenges that limit the public library's ability to make e-content available to the public.

One book – One user model creates long holds and waits for patrons

Most libraries are limited to one user-one book checkout model of e-content for users requiring libraries to purchase multiple copies of titles which often are bought at high prices. This often creates long hold lists for titles in libraries with many users turning to retail to purchase the latest best sellers.

Platform issues

Major e-content platform vendors have agreements with major publishers to sell e-content to libraries at higher prices because of the mistaken belief that libraries may have a chilling effect on retail sales because libraries are lending titles to patrons that they might have otherwise purchased.

Many e-content platform vendors that offer access to major best sellers also charge very high prices for use of the platforms and limit or disallow the sharing of titles between libraries.

E-content issues

E-content platform vendors often require libraries to use their marketplace to purchase e-content for use by patrons on their specific e-content platform.

Libraries interested in identifying quality self-published content and making it available to their community are often required to use the one-book-one user model. This is the case even if the self-published author is willing to make the title available through simultaneous use with no holds for programs such as one book-one community or book club reads.

User Experience with library platforms

At times the user experience with library e-content platform for discovery and checkout of titles has multiple steps for the user. There is also confusion when the library has more than one e-content platform yet there appears to the patron to be no difference in the platforms.

Furthermore these platforms can vary greatly in user experience.

GOALS

The reading ecosystem diagram represents the industries working to serve readers in a variety of ways. In an ideal ecosystem there would be more interaction between these industries to best serve the reader who is at the center of each group's work and shared by all.

There are three broad strategies for RAILS e-content activities:

- identify key issues that we share in better serving the reader
- create partnerships across the reading ecosystem to co-create models and strategies to deliver econtent through libraries that represent and meet the needs and goals of those in the reading ecosystem and;
- actively work with these partners to cultivate a nation of lifelong readers.



To achieve these goals RAILS is focusing on experimentation and innovation in three key areas to improve and expand e-content reading opportunities for Illinois residents through collaboration with partners across the reading ecosystem.

- Access
- Content
- Experience

Included with this document is a table that details the activities and projects that RAILS has undertaken to support RAILS libraries in the three areas of access, content and experience.

SELF-PUBLISHED E-CONTENT

One of the most multi-faceted issues that spans all three focus areas of access, content and experience (ACE) is that of libraries delivering self-published content to the community.

Many public libraries are faced daily with patrons from local writing groups who request their self-published work be available through their local library.

This presents a conundrum for local libraries as they lack the time or resources to read every self-published work requested to be included in their collection. Self-published work rarely has reviews in major library publications which serve as a key resource for selection of materials.

Self-published content is a major part of the reading ecosystem because as other e-content formats have leveled off in terms of consumer reading and purchase, self-published e-content reading and purchase has become number one over the past several years. Self-published e-content has disrupted current traditional publishing models by circumventing the long established path of author success through publishing houses for a more start-up model of authors setting their own terms for building a following and often determining access to their titles on their own terms.

Self-published content is a critical feature of successful community engagement in an age where people consciously shop local, eat local and now read local often through self-published titles.

To support Illinois libraries in identifying and accessing quality self-published content for the community RAILS has partnered with the Soon to be Famous Illinois Author Project (STBF). STBF is a statewide contest where librarians judge self-published fiction by Illinois self-published authors who have been nominated by their local library. The project is the brainchild of members of the RAILS and Illinois Library Association (ILA) marketing committee.

The Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project is a demonstration of how libraries offer the unique value proposition of librarian expertise of knowing what community members need and read, with the ability to introduce community members to new genres, authors and local content and to create more community engagement through open access to self-published titles.

RAILS strategies to support expanding access to self-published content with a seamless experience for the user included partnering with the company BiblioLabs for their e-content platform, BiblioBoard. This platform has the ability to host content from anywhere (given legal access) including self-published and titles from smaller independent publishers.

THE FUTURE IS MULTITYPE

RAILS is a multitype consortium committed to experimentation and innovation in e-content through ACE for all types of libraries.

However, the e-content landscape is varies for academic, special and school libraries.

As the digital landscape and technology available changes almost daily, RAILS is committed to continuing to investigate, explore and amplify models that support access to quality e-content and resource sharing for Illinois libraries.

IT'S ALL ABOUT RESOURCE SHARING.

Platform	Project/feature	Access Content Experience (ACE)	Description	Impact	RAILS Strategic Plan Goal
BiblioBoard	Geolocation	Experience	Removes the friction of logins and passwords. Authentication is done by IP address and not by a valid library card as with most library resources.	Easy access to content with no friction. Potential to attract new users to the library.	Access to Information
eRead Illinois Axis 360	3:1 holds ratio	Access + Content + Experience	Shorter waits and faster access to popular titles from their local public library.	Positions the library as a resource for best-sellers in a timely fashion.	Access to Information/Leadership and Innovation
BiblioBoard	Simultaneous use/no holds	Access + Content	There are no waits for titles and multiple patrons may be reading titles at the same time.	Ideal for classroom and school library use and community reads such as one book/one community.	Access to Information
BiblioBoard	Pop Up Picks	Content	First in the country with Pop Up Picks –curated and themed content that changes every three months.	Partnership with Independent Publishers Group to intro community to fresh, new content and genres.	Leadership & Innovation

Platform	Project/feature	Access Content Experience (ACE)	Description	Impact	RAILS Strategic Plan Goal
BiblioBoard	Soon to be Famous/self-published content	Content	Statewide program to select quality self-published content from local authors sponsored by the library.	Connect community members to self-published titles and position library's unique value proposition for self-published content.	Leadership & Innovation
eRead Illinois Axis 360	Browser based reader	Access	eRead Illinois accessibility with Chromebooks which are used by many schools in a 1:1 (each student has access to a device where they utilize all of their textbooks and information via an electronic device).	Schools have access to an affordable e-content program. Other e-content providers have excluded schools from resource sharing via e-content platforms.	Access to Information
eRead Illinois Axis 360	Scoping	Access	Platform feature designed to allow libraries participating in shared collection to customize access based on community climate/audience/age.	Access to an affordable e-content program.	Resource Sharing

Platform	Project/feature	Access Content Experience (ACE)	Description	Impact	RAILS Strategic Plan Goal
eRead Illinois Axis 360	Major publisher access	Access + Content	Partnered with Baker & Taylor to gain access to e-book vendors who previously would not sell to library consortia.	Positions the library as a resource for best -sellers in a timely fashion.	Access to Information / Resource Sharing
eRead Illinois Axis 360	Development of a statewide platform for libraries to share e-content (eRead Illinois)	Access	Partnered with Baker & Taylor to develop a shared platform for e-content statewide (RAILS and IHLS non-SHARE libraries).	Affordable e-content access for libraries of all sizes.	Leadership & Information / Resource Sharing
n/a App can be used with e-book platforms used by public	SimplyE for Consortia	Experience	Single sign-on for multiple e-book platforms (Cloud Library, Overdrive, Axis 360).	Easy access to multiple e-content platforms and more titles for patron.	Leadership & Innovation