

BENEFITS OF ALS/RSA MEMBERSHIP FOR LOCAL LIBRARIES

According to staff of online members of ALS/RSA, there are many local benefits to offset the cost of online membership

- 1 . Resources are centrally located and managed.
- 2 . Community-wide resource sharing is a reality and benefits the patrons in multiple constituencies.
- 3 . Records conform to OCLC standards so users can rely on consistency and accuracy

LOCAL AUTONOMY

Parameters are set to meet local policies to maintain local control and preferences. For example, circulation period and fines are established locally, not by the consortium. The local library decides what materials can be loaned outside the local library. The system includes 254 media types for local libraries to select what is most appropriate locally.

To simplify system-wide blocking of delinquent patrons, the common blocking point was established by the membership. Otherwise, most decisions are still local with the advantage of having remote staff to maintain the day-to-day functionality of the database.



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Alliance Library System

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FOR NEW MEMBERS

When a local library investigates options for automation, RSA is a viable option.

- ? Membership provides the support necessary to make the transition the traditional card catalog to an electronic web-based catalog.
- ? Membership provides mentors for initiating and maintaining automated circulation.
- ? Upgrades, database management, and training are included in the regular fees.
- ? ALS no longer has annual funding from Illinois State Library to fund new members, but we continuously seek ways to help libraries become members.

STANDARDS

Standards make it easier for everyone who is searching the database to find consistent records.

The entire RSA database is built on OCLC standards. The long history and commitment of the members to high quality catalog records meant that ALS/RSA had the cleanest records in the state of Illinois during a statewide analysis of quality of the cataloging records, Marc of Quality. In the first year, RSA had only 19 records out of 900,000 rejected for quality control. The second year showed the same level of high quality records.

KEY QUESTIONS FROM LOCAL LIBRARY BOARDS

1. Does the local library lose autonomy?
No, each library sets up its own profile to meet local needs.
2. Why does the local library have to pay to be a member of RSA?
Fees partially cover the cost of maintaining the staff and equipment required for maintaining RSA functionality.
3. What if there is no perceived local need?
Talk to libraries that are current RSA members. Local libraries and local patrons generally express that there is value in having full access to library resources in the area and on the web.

SUSTAINABILITY OF ALS/RSA

RSA is a core service for the Alliance Library System along with delivery. Funds will continue to support these two projects because of the advantages offered to all libraries and all citizens of Illinois.

“For local service, resource discovery and resource delivery are key to meeting the needs of library constituents,” according to library consultant William Moen, University of North Texas.

Valerie Wilford, Executive Director of ALS, concurs with the RSA membership in stating that, “Having committed ourselves to RSA, we will continue to support RSA.”

WHAT MEMBERS SAY

“For schools, it is a Godsend! It has opened the library beyond the four walls and the local community.”

“Online is the best. –It puts you on the map.”

“RSA is changing focus to what patrons want not products for the library staff and RSA staff. Emphasis has changed to moving biggest and best products to patrons.”

“Grants from Illinois State Library and Alliance Library System have helped RSA grow by helping libraries become members.”

“Having the capital development funds included in the membership fee eliminates surprise assessments or unplanned requests for funds.”

ABOUT THE DOWNSIDE

In the past, the membership size has slowed the process of upgrading to new products. Currently, members select from available modules. Libraries will incur set-up fees but annual fees will not change with the addition of modules.

As with any automation product, vendor buyouts affect product delivery. Being part of a consortium means that no local library has to fight the vendor battles alone.