



## INNOVATIVE CASE STUDY

When libraries in Illinois came together to form the largest consortium in North America, Polaris emerged as the leading platform to support over 400 locations with one single database.

In 2011, libraries in the state of Illinois were at a crossroads. Four regional library systems, representing four sets of consortia, were experiencing financial constraints despite the growing needs of member libraries and their patrons. After discussing how the four independent organizations could work together, their initial strategy focused on sharing resources at the administrative level, creating the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS). Upon diving deeper into their workflows and how to best serve their users, staff concluded they would select one platform and share resources as well—creating SHARE (Sharing Heartland’s Available Resources Equally).

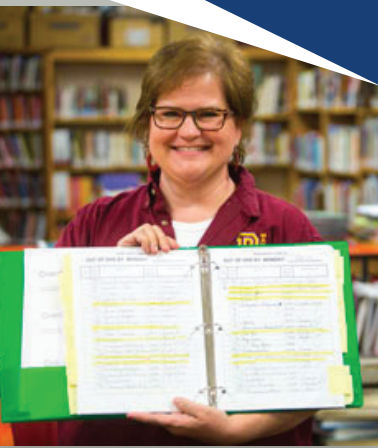
*“Simple doesn’t necessarily mean easy when you’re managing over 400 libraries, and having access to our data is important for our consortium. Polaris was a jump in technology in 2011, and continues to be an intuitive, viable, robust solution today. Polaris is the platform you want when you move forward.”*

—Leslie Bednar, Executive Director, IHLS

### CHALLENGE: TO IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT A SINGLE LIBRARY AUTOMATION SYSTEM THAT COULD SATISFY THE NEEDS, EXPECTATIONS, AND IDENTITIES OF OVER 400 LIBRARIES MOVING FORWARD.

Confident in their decision to move to an integrated library system, Illinois Heartland began their search. Staff efforts were focused on three areas:

- Finding a platform that could handle the large amount of data from organizations of their size
- Scalable training methods to support a wide range of library types and sizes, across broad geographic regions
- A trusted partner, who would deliver seamless integrations with other third-party vendors



## THE VALUE OF POLARIS FOR CONSORTIA

Impressed by the user interface and back-end support of Polaris, the consortia selected the solution that would provide local autonomy for a range of library types and sizes via one robust, shared system. Extensive functionality built into Polaris that strengthens workflow efficiencies, paired with a lower cost for maintenance, means library staff have more opportunities to engage with patrons, cultivate their communities, and offer more services at the local library level.

## TRAINING WITHOUT GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

With member libraries spread across 28,000 square miles, remote training would be critical to the success of the consortium. “We can’t be in every library location, so offering training options to meet the needs of every member library is extremely valuable,” said Bednar. From phone calls, to training modules and short videos, library staff throughout the southern region of Illinois had a variety of training materials at their fingertips. However, it was the intuitive presentation of the Polaris interface that helped IHLS overcome geographic barriers. Staff quickly learned how to use the software—especially those who had not worked with automated groups in the past—due to the way in which the Polaris interface was designed.

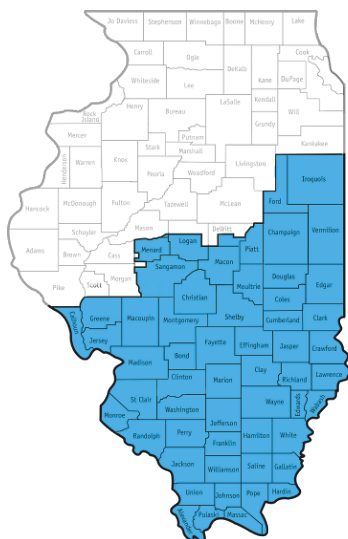
## CONTINUED SUCCESS WITH POLARIS

With the successful launch of Polaris behind them, staff at IHLS set their eyes on achieving another feat: solidifying funds to continue growing their consortium and increasing access to electronic resources. IHLS accomplished this by receiving a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant and participating in a statewide e-content grant. As a Polaris library partner, this meant a seamless integration with 3M, significantly enhancing the patron experience.

As a result of the Polaris interface and integrated e-content capabilities, IHLS continues to grow its SHARE (Sharing Heartland’s Available Resources Equally) consortium. Today, IHLS continues to thrive with over 480 service locations throughout southern and central Illinois.

*“The melding of e-content, what’s available in Polaris, and our growing database—that’s a slam dunk! For us, everything fell into place perfectly and it’s worked out incredibly well since then. Our decision provided an unbelievable opportunity for our member libraries, especially those in smaller communities, and it continues to be a positive factor for us.”*

—Leslie Bednar, Executive Director, IHLS



IHLS covers 28,141 square miles and serves a population of 2,248,634.

There are 525 member libraries:

- 34 Academic
- 227 Public
- 234 School
- 30 Special