

## RPLS Demographic and Social Trends

Geographically, RPLS is primarily rural and composed of small towns and medium sized cities.

Two large cities, Springfield and Decatur, with populations in excess of 85,000 residents, are the economic drivers of the area. They are both home rule communities, but are quite different in their make-up and culture.

Springfield, the state capital, is government oriented. The majority of the residents are either employed by the state or tangentially connected to state government. Many state agencies in Springfield are members of RPLS, including Illinois State Museum, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Archives, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Supreme Court, and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. As a tourist destination, Springfield is well-known for other Lincoln sites, the Dana-Thomas House, nearby New Salem, and many more museums and memorials. Springfield is the home of the Illinois State Fair. In addition, Springfield has five colleges or universities that are members of RPLS.

Decatur is an agri-business and industrial center. Several plants have closed, but Fortune 500 companies such as Caterpillar and ADM maintain offices and major facilities in Decatur. Both ADM and Tate & Lyle (formerly A. E. Staley) have global headquarters in Decatur and are members of RPLS. Decatur is an active union town. At one time Decatur was dubbed “Park City USA” because it had more parks per person than any other city in the country and that pride continues. The city also has a strong emphasis on arts and entertainment. The annual Decatur Celebration and Theater 7 Community Theater are examples of this strength. Millikin University and Richland Community College are in Decatur. The Farm Progress Show is an important part of Decatur. This “world’s fair of agriculture” is held in Decatur on a bi-annual basis and brings hundreds of thousands of people to Macon County.

Both cities have large medical institutions that are leaders in their field. St. John’s Hospital and Memorial Medical Center (site of SIU school of Medicine) are in Springfield. In Decatur Medical Facilities include St. Mary’s and Decatur Memorial Hospitals and the Cancer Care Specialist of Central Illinois that conducts cancer research & treatment. The hospitals employ a large workforce. Numerous small businesses, restaurants, shopping malls, etc., provide services to the cities and other surrounding communities. Air transportation is available from each city. There is a growing diversity in the ethnicity in both cities, and this diversity is moving to the communities surrounding them. People from other countries are coming to the cities because of the universities, medical centers, and ADM.

The medium sized communities in RPLS are Lincoln, Clinton, Taylorville, Effingham, Rochester, Chatham and Mt. Zion. These communities serve library populations from 10,000-20,000. Rochester, Chatham and Mt. Zion can be termed bedroom communities to the adjoining larger cities. The others are also county seats that provide some stability of economic and population growth.

Unemployment is varied. Decatur has a rate of 12.5 %; 2% above the state average. Macon County as a whole is 11.4%. Sangamon County is 7.4% ,with Springfield being 7.6 %, just slightly above the county rate. Other counties have the following unemployment rates:

County	Rate
Menard	7.4%
Effingham	8.0%
Piatt	8.0%
Moultrie	8.7%
Dewitt	8.8%
Logan	9.2%
Shelby	9.8
Christian	9.9%
Cumberland	9.9%

Rolling Prairie’s rural area is dotted with small communities from 5,000 people down to a few hundred. Many of these communities are struggling economically. Even if they are 30 – 40 miles from a larger city, a significant portion of the population commutes to work. These are proud communities that hold their own festivals and have strong traditions. Some have unique small museums such as the Coal Mine Museum in Moweaqua. Others have small niche industries or businesses.

A recent trend has emerged in creating green energy supplies. Facilities that provide wind, clean coal, and biofuels dot the RPLS landscape in Macon, Logan, and Christian County. This is a trend that will continue for many years.

Many of the school districts in Rolling Prairie are struggling. Class sizes in small schools are dropping, while in larger schools class size is growing, but state funding for schools is not coming in a timely fashion. Many teachers are being laid off, and the library, music and art programs are often the first to go. Of the 44 public school districts in the RPLS area, only two small elementary districts near Lincoln are not members. Five parochial schools, four Catholic, and one Lutheran, hold RPLS membership.

RPLS has a strong culture of member involvement and sharing. The libraries in Sangamon County have worked together on the “Big Read” Project. Macon County libraries have also worked together on projects. Several groups of libraries have banded together for grant projects and ongoing sharing of resources. Numerous special interest groups have formed in RPLS. Some groups were formed along geographic lines, such as the Macon County School Librarians, Sangamon, Mason, Menard, and Macoupin County School Librarian’s Network, and the Christian/Shelby School librarians. Others formed by type: Small Pubs for the small libraries in the system, Medium Pubs for those mid-sized libraries, and CAC (Capital Area Consortium), a group of special libraries. A Librarian’s Advisory Committee gives input to the System Director. The LLSAP has a Governing Board and several volunteer standing committees: Finance, Policy, Database Standards, and Technology which develop a budget, fees, and rules for the operation of the LLSAP. The RPLS Board is made up of a Librarian from Public, Special, Academic, and

School libraries and 5 Trustees from public libraries, with one coming from either Decatur or Springfield library boards.

The system has a population of 445,614 based on the 200 census and covers an area of 4,639 square miles. The number of libraries by type is in the chart below. This chart also shows those the LLSAP membership by type of library

<b>Library Type</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Bldg</b>	<b>LLSAP-AGCY</b>	<b>LLSAP-BLDG</b>
Academic	9	9	2	2
Public	47	47	45	46
School	46	179	27	83
Special	20	22	12	14
RPLS			1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	121	256	86	145

33% of the public libraries have a Director with an MLS. We have six school districts on developmental status because they do not have a certified librarian in the district. The rest have at least one certified school librarian in the district.

What do the members of RPLS value? The members value their involvement and member voice in the system operations. Delivery and LLSAP are key services to many libraries but they also value the consultants that they term the networking hub for system members.

What they want in a new system is a voice, member involvement, transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and consideration of the distances that will be involved in the new entity.

#### Academic Libraries in RPLS

Benedictine University at Springfield (Charles E. Becker Library), Springfield

Lincoln Christian University (Jessie C. Eury Library). Lincoln

Lincoln College (McKinstry Library), Lincoln

Lincoln Land Community College (Learning Resource Center), Springfield

Millikin University (Staley Library), Decatur

Richland Community College (Learning Resources Center), Decatur

Robert Morris University (Thomas Jefferson Library), Springfield

Southern Illinois University (School of Medicine), Springfield

University of Illinois at Springfield (Brookens Library), Springfield

Special Libraries in RPLS:

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library , Springfield

Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM Lakeview Research Library), Decatur

Illinois Department of Transportation (Policy and Research Center), Springfield

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Library), Springfield

Illinois State Archives (Margaret Cross Norton Building), Springfield

Illinois State Museum (Research & Collections Ctr. Library), Springfield

Lincoln Correctional Center (Library), Lincoln

Logan Correctional Center Library, Lincoln

Macon-Piatt Cooperative Instructional Service Center, Decatur

Memorial Medical Center (Kenneth H. Schnepf Professional Library), Springfield

Sacred Heart Convent Library, Springfield

Springfield Art Association (Michael Victor II Art Library), Springfield

St. John`s Hospital (Health Science Library), Springfield

St. Mary`s Hospital (Health Science Library), Decatur

Supreme Court of Illinois Library (Supreme Court Building), Springfield

Tate & Lyle (Technical Information Center), Decatur

Taylorville Correctional Center Library, Taylorville