



July 2017

**TO:** RAILS Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Dee Brennan  
**ABOUT:** Executive Director Report –July 2017

### Executive Director Goals for FY 2017

- Complete system membership standards work
- Develop a plan with options to serve the unserved
- Continue to work on goals of the strategic plan
- Encourage patron-centered re-alignment/merger/consolidation of LLSAPs and consortia
- Develop more services for non-public libraries and enhance the role of academic and special libraries in RAILS
- Offer grants for multi-type collaborative projects to encourage resource sharing and cooperation among different types of libraries
- Identify ways to measure the impact of RAILS services
- Develop a transition plan for ITBOC services in FY 2018 in collaboration with the ISL
- Develop a long term plan for further delivery outsourcing and reduction of our physical footprint
- Ensure effective orientation of new board members and that ongoing communication with all board members provides all necessary information for the board to make timely, informed decisions

My monthly reports are organized according to the goals of the strategic plan and these goals.

My goals will be updated for FY 2018 after they are finalized.

### Resource Sharing

The Consortia Model Working Group has met three times and developed many excellent ideas for the future funding of consortia in RAILS. Just before the third meeting, we heard the news about the state budget being passed, so the nature of the conversation changed somewhat at the third meeting as the financial pressure was somewhat relieved (at least in the near term). The Consortia Committee is meeting on July 24 and the working group is meeting again in early August. I will report at the board meeting on the Consortia Committee discussion.

### Membership standards implementation plans

Jane, Joe, Amanda Musacchio, Veronda and I met to discuss next steps for the standards. We identified key areas of activity: data analysis, training, development of a checklist and determining a test group. We are moving forward in all of these areas and will report to the board regularly on progress.

## **Access to Information**

A second discussion about the unserved will be held at the State Library on August 17 from 1 to 3 pm. Michelle Simmons and the director at Warren County, Larissa Good, will attend the meeting as they are interested in being a test case for serving the unserved.

The Illinois Digital Heritage Hub board meeting was held on July 17. (I am on the board). The IDHH is the Illinois piece of the Digital Public Library of American (DPLA) which is a nationwide effort to create a consistent digital platform and provide access to library materials in digital form (images, books, local history archives, etc). The DPLA board has established a new funding structure which requires that hubs pay an annual fee of \$10,000 to be members of DPLA. The board voted in favor of paying this sum to DPLA. Until now, DPLA funding has been based on grants and other fundraising efforts. There is definitely a need for stable and predictable funding for this important project.

## **Continuing Education and Consulting**

The Directors University steering committee met on July 13. We reviewed the results of the participant survey and identified changes we can make for the event next year. We already have the dates booked for June 4 through 8, 2018.

On July 14, the Elevate steering committee met; this is the library leadership development training program that will replace Synergy. We talked about funding and fundraising, and a timeline for applications and selection of participants.

The ALA conference was held in Chicago from June 23 through June 27. Many of our staff attended and worked in our booth at the exhibit hall. We were also able to offer many exhibitor passes to our members for which we received numerous expressions of appreciation. The Gail Borden Library in Elgin closed their library for a day so that the entire staff could attend the conference using our exhibitor passes.

I presented with Kathy Caudill at the United for Libraries “Nuts and Bolts” program on “board development for trustees.” We had a large attendance and lots of questions. Many of the attendees were from RAILS libraries so it was a great opportunity to connect with members and answer their questions.

## **Member Engagement**

At our most recent member update, OCLC was a topic of discussion. Members in attendance asked RAILS to lead an effort to find alternatives to OCLC and also ways to lower OCLC costs for libraries. We will be using our website as a place to share information about OCLC costs and alternatives.

## **Leadership and Innovation**

After a conversation at ALA midwinter, the ASCLA Consortial ebook interest group (co-chaired by Veronda), began working on an Ebook summit that would bring together stakeholders from across the country to develop a national agenda about access to ebooks in libraries of all types; discuss new business models, and create a set of shared operating principles. Veronda and I presented this idea to the ASCLA board at the annual conference and they approved it going forward. We then talked with ALA president Jim Neal about participants, timing and whether it would be better to hold the summit at the annual conference in June of 2018 or at the midwinter conference in February of 2018.

We are investigating an exciting new project related to “fake news.” Mary Minow, a librarian and lawyer, is interested in involving RAILS libraries to test her concept. Here is a preliminary discussion document about the project from Mary:

**Rationale:** Literature suggests that direct contradiction of facts can be counterproductive and serve to entrench individuals in their beliefs if done in a threatening manner. A gentle offer to a user to “do it yourself” research may circumvent this. Librarians are highly trusted by the American public as neutral guides to information. The American Library Association [Code of Ethics](#) promotes equitable access, unbiased and courteous responses to users. The International Federation of Library Associations [Code of Ethics](#) adheres to neutrality and open access. Librarians teach online and offline research skills to students as a key function of their jobs.

**Limitation:** Many social media users choose to share “fake news” as sport.

**Method:** Place ads in Facebook (and potentially similar platforms) that encourage social media users to connect with a librarian if they want to learn self-help tools to check out a story they see posted online. A small number of users will be offered a live chat room with a librarian. Others will type out their question and receive a response from a librarian within 24 hours. Still others who ask questions on particular trending topics will receive pre-written guides to sources on that topic. Willing users will fill out evaluation surveys to show what they find most helpful.

**Additional information:** The responses to the users will often offer a **wider view** on a topic, suggesting credible sources that span different spectrums. Responses will always end with guidance on how to contact their local library for more information.

**Prototype:** The Harvard Law Library Innovation Lab will develop a backend for librarians to work on answers. This will test user and librarian interactions. A/B testing will look to answer questions such as

## Organizational Excellence

Our staff retreat was held on July 20 at Starved Rock. Our topic for the day was design thinking. Staff from the Chicago Public Library led the training session for our staff. We worked on two questions:

How might we increase member library awareness of what RAILS does in order to encourage greater use of RAILS services?

How might we improve engagement among RAILS staff in order to foster a team based culture?

Staff worked in teams to come up with solutions to these questions. There were many great ideas which I will report on to the board at a future meeting.

We bid a sad farewell to our ITBOC colleagues at the retreat. Their positions at RAILS end officially on August 30, 2017.

## **Stewardship**

Of course, the passage of a state budget was very good news. We are now awaiting word from the State Library on detailed numbers and information for RAILS.

Construction at Burr Ridge began on schedule on June 5. Right now, the recarpeting is underway as well as work on the plumbing. It is chaos!