



21 March 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: New format for monthly reports

Board members, many of you will recall that we have had many conversations over the years about the purpose, value and desired content of the RAILS monthly reports, both my report and the operations report. RAILS staff spend a good deal of time on these reports and they certainly take a good deal of time for board members to fully digest.

We are changing the reports as part of our effort to inform the board more effectively and completely about RAILS services, projects, challenges and accomplishments.

Beginning in March, we will focus the report on major RAILS projects on a rotating basis so that we can go into more depth and talk about the overall goals of a project and potential impact on members.

We will also be revising our statistics, emphasizing numbers that show impact of our services and provide context that shows growth and change in the numbers. We will provide statistics on a quarterly basis.

I look forward to your feedback. I think we should try the new formats for a few months, and discuss any needed changes or tweaking at our May meeting.



21 March 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – March 2018

Welcome to spring (finally)! Moving forward, my report to you will cover major activities since your last board meeting, as well as other news I would like the board to know about. It will also look ahead to some of the major activities we are planning for the upcoming month.

Updating the RAILS Strategic Plan

As you will note from a separate item in this month's board packet, seeking member input to help us update the RAILS strategic plan has been a major focus this month. The plan is almost four years old, and we want to ensure that it still addresses the major needs of our members and continues to lead RAILS into the future. We have received some very useful feedback from members from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) thus far.

RAILS Board Election

The RAILS Board election process has begun! Nominations are due by the end of March. We already have several candidates for the five open seats: two at-large and three public library trustee seats. Terms for all five positions will begin on July 1, 2018 and end June 30, 2021. The Nominating Committee will meet to review the nominations in April and the online election will run via the RAILS website from April 30 – May 18.

Public Library Association Conference

The biennial Public Library Association (PLA) conference was held in Philadelphia from March 21 – March 24. Jane Plass, Anne Slaughter, Nicole Zimmermann, and I attended. This event attracts nearly 10,000 public library staff and stakeholders from across the country and around the world. It features over 100 educational programs and gives us an excellent opportunity to network and stay up-to-date with the evolving needs of our public library members.

You will be hearing more about the PLA conference at your March meeting.

RAILS Delivery

As we've discussed in the past, RAILS has been working with the Laboratory of Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) at Southern Illinois University to analyze current delivery routes and hub locations to find different options that will result in more efficient delivery service for our members and potential cost savings for RAILS.

LASA has developed a RAILS delivery database that can display current routes and other delivery information graphically and that can be used to explore various "what if" scenarios using existing RAILS delivery hubs (service centers), alternate numbers and locations of delivery hubs, and alternate routing for the ILDS nightly shuttle runs that move materials between RAILS and IHLS hubs.

RAILS and LASA staff will continue to work together on further refinements and analyses. Some key takeaways from our most recent meeting are:

- Consolidation and standardization of delivery data is crucial. Much time and effort were spent on data clean-up due to discrepancies among multiple sources of delivery data (L2, route lists, delivery volume spreadsheets, etc.). RAILS is already working on automating the collection of delivery data to alleviate this problem.
- Primary factors in determining routes in the Chicago metropolitan area are high delivery volume (number of bins) and vehicle capacity. Outside the Chicago metropolitan area, geography—the distance between stops—is the primary factor.
- There may be opportunities to optimize delivery routes using our existing hubs.
- The LASA work takes into account only delivery information (number of stops, distances between stops, delivery volume, fuel, driver time, etc.). Other aspects, such as hub capacity and operation costs will also need to be considered in planning for any changes.

Looking Ahead to April

We continue to work on our draft system membership standards. We will introduce you to the latest developments at your March meeting (see separate item in your packet), followed by a more in-depth discussion in April.

Mitchell Davis, Co-Founder and Chief Business Officer at BiblioLabs, will attend the April board meeting at Burr Ridge. You will recall that we have a partnership with BiblioLabs to bring a variety of e-resources to any Illinois resident via the BiblioBoard platform.

BiblioBoard collections include self-published and public domain e-books; titles from independent publishers; open educational resources for students; and articles, images, recordings and more on a wide variety of topics. There is no limit on simultaneous use and all of these items can be read by one or 100 people at the same time. You can find more information

about all of our BiblioBoard offerings on the RAILS website at railslibraries.info/services/biblioboard.

Mitchell wants to thank the board for their leadership and commitment to RAILS being a development partner for this project that is the first of its kind in the country. I also plan on recording a podcast with Mitchell while he is in town.

Read on for more information about BiblioBoard and the latest news about other RAILS projects, programs, and services designed to help our member libraries. I hope you will be able to share this information as appropriate with others from your library and/or other RAILS members from your type of library.

Latest RAILS Project News

Certification

The annual [online certification](#) process began on January 2. All RAILS members must complete an online form and a survey on interlibrary loan activity annually to remain eligible for system services (delivery, continuing education, etc.) and grants from the Illinois State Library (public and school library per capita grants, public library construction grants, etc.). The deadline is March 31, 2018.

RAILS staff spend a great deal of time helping members complete the process and contacting libraries that have not yet certified. We help members certify on library visits as needed. We also schedule networking/certification meetings at different RAILS service centers to help members certify in the company of their colleagues.

Below is a breakdown on the number of libraries of each type that have certified as of March 16, 2018. Board members are asked to help spread the word to their library and/or to others from their type of library on the need to complete this process.

Type of library	Completed certification form and ILL survey	Total RAILS members by type of library
Academic	100	124
Public	385	412
School	509	559
Special	144	192
Total	1,138	1,287

E-Resources

More BiblioBoard News

Through RAILS' partnership with BiblioLabs, any Illinois resident has access to thousands of e-resources free of charge and without needing a login or library card. This program has proved to be very popular with our member libraries and is usually one of the most asked about services on member visits and at RAILS' conference exhibit booths. As a result, we are always looking for ways to optimize our members' use of this program.

On Thursday, April 26, RAILS will host a [#BiblioBoardBingo and pizza party](#) to help members create new ways to connect the different BiblioBoard collections to their current programs and events and to introduce library patrons to new indie titles and resources. As the name implies, pizza will be served!

RAILS member libraries have asked for materials to help them promote the different BiblioBoard

offerings to their customers. To meet this need, we have added print and web-ready files for bookmarks, rack cards, and posters to the RAILS website at railslibraries.info/services/biblioboard under the heading: Program and Promotion Ideas/Marketing Collateral Files. We will add additional materials as they become available.

National E-Book Summit

On a national e-resources scale, RAILS is one of the lead partners currently planning a national e-book summit as a preconference to the American Library Association conference in New Orleans in June. The goal is to collaborate with other e-book initiatives across the country, as well as publishers, vendors, and others, to create a national agenda and action plan to support a sustainable future for e-content in libraries.

Find More Illinois

RAILS member libraries display their library holdings in a number of different ways. Some choose to join one of a number of online shared catalogs (also known as consortia) in the RAILS area. (View a list of available consortia on the [RAILS website](#).) Others choose to have their own “standalone” online catalog. Some RAILS libraries do not have an online catalog for monetary or other reasons.

Instead of having to search these different catalogs separately, [Find More Illinois](#) will offer seamless access to the catalogs of RAILS consortia and standalone libraries that choose to participate. It may also be used by libraries who do not currently have an online catalog. We are starting with a small pilot project of 21 libraries from three consortia: [I-Share](#), [PrairieCat](#), and [Rock River Library Consortium](#). Other libraries can join when the project is expanded, which may be as soon as fall 2018.

The pilot is expected to launch to the general public in May. Everyone will be able to search the virtual catalog after the launch. Only pilot participants and their patrons will be able to actually place interlibrary loan requests.

The RAILS [Resource Sharing Committee](#) approved the charge for a new Find More Illinois Working Group at their first meeting in late February. This group will have an advisory role in developing best practices and a membership fee structure for future expansion of Find More Illinois. It includes representatives from each consortium participating in the pilot project and two representatives from libraries with standalone catalogs.

Other Highlights

Helping Libraries Save Money

RAILS has a resident book repair expert on staff (Amanda Musacchio, Resource Sharing Specialist) who conducts workshops at conferences and who travels to RAILS libraries to teach them book repair skills. Libraries are encouraged to invite staff from other libraries in the area to attend these sessions as well. Though RAILS school libraries most frequently request these workshops, they are available to all types of libraries.

On March 15, we held a book repair workshop at Peacock Middle School in Itasca. Fifteen staff members from five different school districts attended to learn how they could save money by repairing the materials on their shelves rather than having to replace them with new materials.

Continuing Education (CE) News

Leadership Training

A frequent request from RAILS members is for leadership training and help for new library directors. RAILS staff play a lead role in two statewide programs to help meet these needs.

Elevate recruits and nurtures future Illinois library leaders. Staff from all types of libraries are eligible to participate in this one-day program. It will be held at the University of Illinois Springfield, on Saturday, April 28. Directors University is a week-long event that provides training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors. Last year's event was extremely well-received.

RAILS heavily promoted both events in our weekly *E-News* and via other means. Registration for Elevate ended on March 12 and there were over 120 applications. Registration for Directors University ended on March 23, and at the time of this writing, there were 45 applications.

Expansion of RAILS CE Networking Grant

RAILS has expanded our [CE Grant](#) and will now also accept applications from libraries and consortia offering CE open to any RAILS member. While still supporting networking group events, which was the original intent of the grant, expanding eligibility requirements will encourage members from different parts of the RAILS service area to take advantage of this opportunity and will also bring new and different training opportunities to RAILS members. March 31 is the next application deadline for this program.

RAILS CE Offerings

The Management Association's "Sexual Harassment in Your Workplace: Creating an Environment of Respect through Training, Policy, and Action" webinar was one of the highest attended RAILS CE programs in February. During the webinar, there were several questions from participants about how to conduct a workplace investigation on harassment. Based on this interest, RAILS is working with the Management Association to offer a follow-up session specific to workplace investigations.

Upcoming April CE events include a program on Skokie Public Library's Civic Lab (April 6), a program on budgets and levies (April 10), and a two-day intermediate Python coding workshop (April 12-13).

Member Engagement

Multitype Collaboration Opportunities

RAILS members have asked us to help them find ways to collaborate with members from other types of libraries. Our Multitype Collaborative Grants are designed to encourage this collaboration. Each grant project must include at least two different types of libraries. The next application deadline is April 20. More information is available at railslibraries.info/services/multitype-grants.

April 11 RAILS Member Update

RAILS holds quarterly sessions to update our members on the latest RAILS news. Members can attend at one of several videoconference locations located throughout our area, or via one-way, live streaming video. We usually have over 100 attendees and the number of members who choose to participate via streaming is steadily increasing.

The [next member update](#) will be on Wednesday, April 11, from 10 a.m.–noon. Topics include RAILS efforts to update our strategic plan, system membership standards, Find More Illinois, and reports from members about two projects that were awarded RAILS Multitype Collaborative grants: a public/school library collaboration to establish a family literacy program for Latino families and a public/school library “Barbers Love Books” program.

RAILS Engages Members at Networking Group Event

In addition to exhibiting at library-related conferences, RAILS also attends networking group events as appropriate. These events provide an excellent opportunity to share RAILS information with a number of members all in one place. Librarians Working Together (LWT) is a RAILS networking group in the DeKalb County area. LWT hosted its annual mini-conference on March 9. RAILS awarded the group a CE Networking Grant for the event. RAILS also exhibited at the event and shared the latest RAILS news with 55 attendees.

RAILS Facilities

At the January board meeting, we reported that the Village of Coal Valley requested that the Coal Valley service center property be annexed into the village. The RAILS Board approved us proceeding with this project. On Wednesday, March 7, our Coal Valley property was annexed into the village of Coal Valley and rezoned from a (R1) residential to a (B2) commercial property. This will result in lower water rates and faster police protection from the village, in addition to other benefits.