



18 May 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – May 2018

RAILS Board Election

The RAILS Board election process is completed. The Nominating Committee will meet May 22 to confirm the election results. I will then call the candidates with the results. I will notify the board as soon as I have reached all of the candidates.

Board evaluation project

We continue to work on the board communication evaluation project. This project was an outgrowth of comments from my evaluation last year and from general conversations with board members about their questions and needs as board members. We will be making a full report at the June meeting, but here are a few possible recommendations:

Schedule orientation tours and meetings for all board members early in their term at the Burr Ridge headquarters

Set up a board portal on the RAILS website – this could contain information about budget, legislative issues, services, governance and would be EASY to access

Use the July board meeting to introduce board members to each other and to RAILS services in general

Provide staff opportunities at board meetings to talk in depth about their departments and services

These are just possible suggestions. I want to thank all the board members who filled out the survey and talked with Mary about the orientation process and communication in general. I also want to thank Mary for her hard work and creativity on this project. We have gotten a lot

of insight about how we can better inform the board about services and issues so that both the board and RAILS staff will be able to work more effectively for RAILS members.

National Library Legislative Day

I attended National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC on May 7 and 8 along with approximately 25 other delegates from Illinois including board president Kate Hall.

The ALA Washington office has made several changes this year both to the briefing for delegations which occurs on Monday, and to the taking points for visits on Tuesday. This year, the briefing focused on specific issues, not the vast array of issues that we struggled with in the past. Obviously, there are many legislative issues that will potentially affect libraries and in the past we were expected and encouraged to talk about all of them or many of them. Personally, I did not find this approach useful so I usually focused on the biggest ones – like funding LSTA – and on issues of interest to specific congressional offices and members. This year, we were asked to focus only on funding LSTA and the Museum and Library Services Act (which are almost the same – LSTA is the library part of the MLSA). We also spoke about net neutrality if that was of interest to the congressmen or women we were meeting. I accompanied the delegation to a meeting in the Capitol in Senator Durbin's office, and then I met with staff in Representative Lahood's office and in Representative Foster's office.

Next year, there will not be a separate NLLD in May, as the ALA annual conference is in Washington, DC in June. There will be a rally before the conference to bring attention to library issues.

Member Engagement and other events

Directly after the board meeting in April, I traveled to Springfield for the Elevate leadership conference. Elevate was held at the Illinois State Library and was a partnership project among ILA, RAILS, IHLS and the State Library. It was a fabulous event. Joe, Veronda and I acted as facilitators for small groups. Amanda Musacchio was a participant.

I have been able to visit a number of libraries this month. On May 10 I met with Rich Wolff at Tinley Park; May 11 I was at Schaumburg to meet with Monica Harris and some of her staff; on May 16 I was in Lombard to visit Barb Kruser at the Helen Plum Public Library District. On May 17, I met with Christine Lazarus in Geneva. Both Helen Plum and Geneva are on the brink of breaking ground for building projects.

I attended a special meeting of the Harvey Public Library District board on May 16. Harvey has been in the news lately because of severe financial problems. Their tax collections have fallen to 58% so they have been forced to make major cuts in payroll, hours and staff.

Membership standards update

Greg McCormick and I have talked about the standards and the concerns that the State Library has. We are definitely making progress on resolving the concerns so I have delayed any further discussion until we have agreement.

Looking ahead to June:

Board meeting at the Vernon Area Public Library District

All board members are encouraged to attend in person. We will also invite the newly elected board members.

Presentation of the slate of officers for FY 2019 by the Nominating Committee

Possible further discussion and action on membership standards

Latest RAILS Project News

BiblioBoard & Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project

The [Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project](#) (STBF) was inspired by brand expert/author David Vinjamuri, who challenged librarians attending the 2013 American Library Association conference to demonstrate their influence by helping a self-published author bring his/her work to prominence. RAILS-area library marketing professionals took the challenge to heart and the STBF contest was born.

Each year, self-published Illinois authors of adult fiction find a library to nominate their work. A panel of judges select the winner. Nominations and judges come from academic, public, school, and special libraries across the state. RAILS has supported the project from the start, including extending our [partnership with BiblioLabs](#) to include STBF. The BiblioBoard platform is used during the judging process, some STBF titles are included on the platform, and BiblioLabs offers a \$1,000 award to the winning author/book.

The 2018 STBF winner is *Sweetest Heartbreak*, by Heather Bentley. It is available for a limited time for anyone in Illinois to read in BiblioBoard's PopUp Picks/[Indie Rockstars collection](#).

Heather Bentley – *Sweetest Heartbreak*



Find More Illinois

Find More Illinois now has a logo:



The [Find More Illinois website](#) has been redesigned to incorporate the new logo and its color scheme. Rebranding of the Find More Illinois catalog search screen is also in progress.

Other Highlights

RAILS Consortia News

New 19 Live in SWAN

The 19 libraries in the LINC and MAGIC consortia went live in SWAN on May 1, bringing the total SWAN membership to 97 libraries. This successful migration concludes a project that began approximately three years ago as MAGIC started to consider its future viability and entered into conversations with LINC and SWAN. The LINC and MAGIC organizations are now wrapping up their official dissolution procedures.

RAILS provided leadership, direction, and support throughout the project, including facilitating ongoing discussions between the three groups, hiring a MAGIC manager to assist with the transition, awarding a grant to SWAN to cover one-time migration costs, and awarding individual grants to six libraries to help them comply with SWAN's requirements for network hardware and PC workstations.

FY2020 LLSAP Support Available for All RAILS-Area Consortia

In the past, RAILS has had a series of multi-year contracts with our system-supported catalogs or LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs). After a single "bridge year" contract with each LLSAP in FY2019 (July 2018-June 2019), we are changing that model.

In FY2020, RAILS will shift to an annual process for determining and distributing support to all RAILS-area consortia, including the current RAILS LLSAPs (PrairieCat, RSA, and SWAN) as well as independent consortia. This comes as a result of the new definition of an LLSAP (approved by the RAILS Board in 2016), that allows us to expand our support model. We have distributed application materials to each group, and they are currently considering whether they will apply for RAILS support and what in-kind services they may need.

Every consortium RAILS supports will receive core services and prospective new consortia members will be eligible to apply for RAILS LLSAP Membership Grants to fund their migration projects. Applications for LLSAP support are due August 1, and support amounts and core services will be determined in Fall 2018.

Continuing Education (CE)

Intermediate Python Programming Language Offering

In April, RAILS experimented with a more intensive CE offering than usual. “Intermediate Python for Automation and Data Processing” was held April 12-13 at our Burr Ridge service center. Elizabeth Wickes, from the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois, gave the 13 participants in-depth, hands-on experience with the Python programming language. Participants practiced their programming skills, evaluated core approaches to processing data and automating tasks, practiced technical project planning, and began a personal or work project.

Between June and August, the participants will engage in four online sessions with the instructor to continue their learning, advance their projects, and share outcomes with other participants. As RAILS libraries offer more programs and coding activities that cultivate computational thinking, it is our hope that offering more intermediate/advanced level CE opportunities in this area will help build necessary staff competencies.

June CE Offerings

Upcoming CE events include:

- Directors University, June 4-8, Illinois State Library in Springfield. [This week-long university](#) will provide training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors.
- Librarian’s Guide to Homelessness, June 14, Orland Park Public Library
- Digitizing Newspaper Collections webinar, June 19

Member Engagement

RAILS Member Meetup in Quincy

On Thursday, May 31, RAILS and Quincy University will host a “Member Meetup.” Member Meetups are in-person, multitype library events for members to share best practices and connect on issues related to the profession. RAILS will offer a series of these events in the upcoming months to let members know the latest RAILS news and how it relates to their work.

RAILS Member Visits to Galena, Freeport, and Peoria Regions

Since May 1, RAILS has visited a number of libraries in the Galena/Freeport region (Milledgeville, Pearl City, Hanover Township, and Warren Township libraries) and in the Peoria

region (Martin Township, Danvers, Heyworth High School, and Farmer City libraries). In addition to talking to members about RAILS programs/services, we also learned about some of their interesting programs/services, including a Digital Day program (Milledgeville), a STEAM Day program, and a Native Voices traveling exhibit (Warren Township).

Engaging Members at RAILS Conference Exhibit Booths

Reaching Forward

Approximately 390 staff from RAILS member libraries visited the RAILS exhibit booth at the May 4 Reaching Forward Conference. (This number includes members RAILS staff actually spoke with as opposed to those who just stopped by the booth.)

RAILS staff donned their Star Wars clothing (to celebrate “May the Fourth Be with You Day”) and booth visitors were encouraged to leave their business cards in our Darth Vader box to subscribe to the weekly *RAILS E-News*.

A large number of library support staff attended Reaching Forward (as opposed to directors and department managers), and while many were familiar with core RAILS services such as delivery, they were eager to learn more about our other services as well, including continuing education and the RAILS BiblioBoard offerings.



Reaching Forward South

A total of 57 members from RAILS and the Illinois Heartland Library System visited the RAILS table at Reaching Forward South on Friday, May 11, at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. Most visitors were unfamiliar with [BiblioBoard/Popup Picks](#) and were very interested to hear about this statewide service provided by RAILS. There was also interest in the RAILS FOIA/OMA Hotline (railslibraries.info/foia), which we make available statewide to public library directors and boards.