

20 August 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – August 2018

Staff in service day

We held our sixth in-service day for all staff on July 27 at Waubensee Community College in Sugar Grove. It was a very successful day attended by approximately 80 RAILS staff members. The key note speakers were from the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. LASA has been working on a study of delivery in Illinois to find ways to make delivery more efficient and cost-effective. They have also done fascinating work in other areas using GIS information to solve problems or design new services; for example, they work with school districts on setting up school bus routes.

After the LASA presentation, the rest of the day was organized like a typical conference so that staff could select different programs on various aspects of RAILS services. One of the challenges that we face because of our large service area and multiple sites is that staff do not know each other and aren't as knowledgeable as they would like about services in other departments and centers than their own. The in-service day is really the one time when we can bring everyone together and work on increasing everyone's knowledge of RAILS.

Feedback from the day has been very positive.

Future of delivery meeting at the State Library and next steps

As I mentioned above, LASA has done an extensive analysis of current delivery services in Illinois and how they might be changed to improve efficiency and lower costs. We are meeting on August 22 in Springfield with staff from the State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System and the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois. LASA staff will be there to present their analyses and answer questions. We will share the study with the board in the very near future and will probably also ask LASA to be available at the board meeting to answer questions.

The study could bring significant changes to delivery service and to RAILS. LASA developed different scenarios to determine how to achieve the most efficient delivery service. For

example, different locations for our delivery hubs could reduce driving time and costs. I will report on the meeting in Springfield at the board meeting.

Results of Board Orientation Survey

Thanks to all of you who attended our July 26 board orientation and who completed the follow-up survey. We received 10 responses to the survey (out of a possible 11 responses). Most attendees considered all parts of the orientation to be either “very useful” or “useful.” The Introduction to Library Systems and RAILS PowerPoint was the highest rated item, with 90% of respondents finding it to be “very useful.”

While most respondents (80%) found the amount of information presented at the orientation to be “just right,” there were suggestions for additional topics to cover in the future, including other professional development opportunities for board members, “which RAILS staff do what” and in their own words, a little more detail on the RAILS Board Member Job Description (including input from “seasoned” board members in attendance), and a tour of the RAILS website to name a few. We will be covering some of these topics at future board meetings as a part of our expanding board engagement efforts. Others we will cover in greater detail at future orientation sessions.

There were also several write-in comments to the survey mentioning how useful it was to meet and get to know other RAILS Board members in person. A few commented how useful it was to meet the RAILS staff in attendance as well. We will use all of the feedback from the survey in planning future orientation sessions. Thanks again for your thoughtful feedback!

Association of Rural and Small Libraries conference in Springfield, Illinois

ARSL is meeting in Springfield September 12-15. They are expecting 750 attendees and 60 exhibitors (RAILS is one). This will be a great opportunity for RAILS staff – including me – to talk with many of our members and to learn about the major issues for rural and small libraries all across the country. I am also looking forward to meeting attendees from organizations that are similar to RAILS in other states, and learning about how they serve their members.

July 31 RAILS member update

We hold quarterly member updates to provide members with RAILS news and plans, to get their feedback and to provide opportunities for members to share their stories and news. We usually have more than 100 attendees – in person at our polycom sites and via RAILS Live. Attendees can stream the meetings on their office computers and ask questions online when using RAILS live. These meetings are a great way to keep members informed about RAILS and to get their feedback and answer questions. Members really like hearing from other members so we are now actively reaching out to get volunteers to share their stories. State library staff attend the updates also, and they really appreciate hearing what’s going on in libraries.

Latest RAILS Project News

E-Resources

E-content Presentation at WiLSWorld

Veronda Pitchford, RAILS Director of Membership Development and Resource Sharing, and Mitchell Davis, co-founder of BiblioLabs, presented *From Dystopia to Utopia: The Future of E-content in Libraries* at the WiLSWorld conference in Madison, Wisconsin in late July. WiLS (formerly the Wisconsin Library System) is a nonprofit, multitype library membership organization.

The presentation highlighted the importance of RAILS' partnerships with e-content vendors to expand access to e-content for Illinois residents through libraries and to co-create the future of how e-content is delivered through libraries for better patron experiences.

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. Items on the [BiblioBoard](#) platform have no holds or waiting for titles and can be read by multiple users at the same time. [See more information](#) on all our BiblioBoard offerings.

Watch for New Popup Picks Collection Coming Soon!

A new collection of Popup Picks from BiblioBoard will debut in late August. [Popup Picks](#) is a mobile e-book service that features collections curated by librarians and book industry experts. Collections change quarterly and include award-winning sci-fi, travel, humor, self-help, graphic novels, and other e-books. Stay tuned for more information on the new collection coming soon!

Find More Illinois

[Find More Illinois](#) aims to expand resource sharing and facilitate discovery and interlibrary loan for Illinois libraries and their patrons. It provides a single discovery interface that draws from the online catalogs of participating libraries. It's now time to expand the program beyond the initial 21-library pilot. Adding more libraries will make Find More Illinois a better resource for discovery and fulfillment.

At the July RAILS Board meeting, we presented the proposed fee structure for libraries joining Find More Illinois, and that information is included in the August board packet as well. At the August 24 meeting, we will ask the board to approve this fee structure so that we can move forward with expansion plans.

Planning for promoting participation in Find More Illinois is in high gear. We are modifying the website to add information on how libraries can join the program. In September and October, we will give multiple in-person presentations around the RAILS area; the current schedule is available on Library Learning (L2) at <https://www.librarylearning.info/tags/?FMIdemo>.

There will be also be additional opportunities to learn more about Find More Illinois at future webinars and upcoming library conferences. During the Illinois Library Association conference in Peoria, RAILS will have a reception, sponsored by Auto-Graphics (our software vendor for Find More Illinois), on Tuesday, October 9, from 5:00–6:30 p.m. RAILS Board members are welcome to attend. We hope to see you there!

Other Highlights

Continuing Education (CE)

RAILS Delivery Videos Now Available

RAILS now has a series of short instructional videos focused on delivery. They are intended for front-line staff at our member libraries who are responsible for preparing materials for delivery and other interlibrary loan functions. Topics include:

- Preparing materials for delivery
- Utilizing the RAILS delivery support system
- Using courier services
- Member lookup on the RAILS website
- Ordering delivery labels
- Proper labeling

This project was a joint effort between our delivery and CE departments. Naperville Public Library provided materials and allowed us use of their book drop room for recording. You can view the videos on the RAILS YouTube channel or in the delivery section of the RAILS website at: railslibraries.info/services/delivery-videos.

Upcoming RAILS Continuing Education (CE)

Upcoming CE opportunities include:

- A presentation on the comic book genre on [August 29](#)
- Notary training on [September 10](#)
- Mental health first aid workshops on [September 18](#) at Chillicothe Public Library District and [September 20](#) at Niles-Maine District Library

You can find more information and register on the L2 calendar at librarylearning.info.

Member Engagement

RAILS at Upcoming Library Conferences

RAILS exhibits at a variety of library conferences and events each year, including local, state, and national conferences held in the RAILS area. This gives us a perfect opportunity to engage with a number of our members all in one place. The following are events scheduled for August and September.

- RSA Back to School Workshop, August 8 (see story below)
- SWANx2018 Annual Conference, August 17 (RAILS also helped fund this event with a [CE grant](#).)
- 2018 Association for Rural & Small Libraries Conference in Springfield, September 13-15. In addition to visiting us at our booth, members can pre-schedule a 30-minute, one-on-one discussion with a RAILS staff member to hear more detailed information about RAILS programs/services.
- 2018 Health Science Librarians of Illinois annual conference in Rockford, September 26-28.

Library conferences are also the board development topic for August and there is more information in a separate document in the August board packet.

RAILS Unveils Online New Director Welcome Meetings

RAILS sends welcome emails to new directors at our member libraries with specifics on how the director can start making the most of their RAILS membership. We also offer to visit to provide more information in-person. We've found that new directors do not always have the time to schedule a visit, especially in their early days on the job.

We now offer the option of scheduling online discussions with new directors which take about 30-45 minutes and cover basic, targeted information about RAILS programs/services. So far, two directors have participated and RAILS has two more online welcome sessions scheduled.

Recent RAILS Member Visits

RAILS visited libraries in the Sycamore, Joliet, Freeport, and Galesburg regions in July and early August. [A map of these visits](#) can be viewed on the RAILS website. Highlights include learning about a new building for the Mercer Carnegie Public Library District in Aledo, hearing about Town & Country Public Library District in Elburn's transition from MAGIC to SWAN, and meeting with Polo Public Library District in their newly-dedicated public pavilion.

RSA Back to School Presentation in East Peoria

On Wednesday, August 8, Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, gave a presentation at the 2018 RSA Back to School event at the RAILS East Peoria service center. RSA is a RAILS-supported shared catalog (also known as an LLSAP). Approximately 15 RAILS members from school libraries attended.



Dan discussed RAILS continuing education, grants, resource sharing, e-books, and more. Participants also took the “RAILS or RSA Challenge,” by identifying whether specific services were provided by RAILS or RSA. (There is often confusion among members as to whether services such as delivery come from RAILS or from their shared catalog.)

There was a drawing for those who took the challenge and Stephanie McKinley-Miller from Abingdon-Avon CUSD #276 was the winner. She will receive a \$25 gift certificate.

RAILS Member Meetups

RAILS Member Meetups are in-person, multitype library events for all levels of library staff. The meetups have three goals:

- 1) Help members learn more about RAILS news/services
- 2) Help RAILS learn what’s happening in multiple libraries
- 3) Bring all levels of staff from all types of libraries together for peer-to-peer interaction

Since late May, RAILS has had six member meetups with approximately 60 participants. Recent meetup locations include:

- New Lenox Public Library District (July 24)
- Freeport Public Library (August 2)
- Robert W. Rowe Public Library District in Sheridan (August 23)

We recently started conducting post-event surveys of the meetups to ensure they are having an impact on our members. In feedback from 13 participants at three recent meetups: 83% rated the event either Excellent (30%) or Very Good (53%). Most respondents (69%) said the most valuable aspect of these events is the opportunity to connect with other libraries and library staff.

Upcoming RAILS Member Meetups

Wednesday, September 12, 7:30–9:30 p.m., Brewhaus Bar, Springfield, Illinois.

This event is taking place the evening before the Association for Rural & Small Libraries Conference. All library staff from all library types are invited, whether they are attending the conference or not. Light refreshments will be served. Food can also be purchased and there will be a cash bar.

Tuesday, September 25, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Green Hills Public Library District, Palos Hills.

Attendees will have the opportunity to network and learn more about RAILS. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Green Hills Public Library staff will also offer a tour of the library.

RAILS Board members are welcome to attend both events and can register via the [Library Learning calendar](#) (L2) at librarylearning.info.

Save the Date: RAILS/IACRL Networking Event on November 6

On Tuesday, November 6, RAILS and the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL) will co-host an academic library networking event at Northwestern University in Evanston. This event is open to all academic library staff and will feature information on RAILS and IACRL programs/services and a tour of the Northwestern University Library. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Watch for more details coming soon.

Additional opportunities for academic library networking will be announced soon, in response to numerous requests during our strategic plan listening tour events for more networking activities for this library type.

RAILS Staff News



Meet RAILS' New E-Content Specialist!

Anna Behm joined the RAILS staff on August 13 as E-Content Specialist in our Resource Sharing department. Anna has worked in libraries for 14 years. Her most recent position was as Information Services & Emerging Technologies Manager at Riverside Public Library. Prior to that, she was the Adult Services Coordinator & Reference Librarian at Westmont Public Library.

Anna will be helping our libraries increase their circulation of RAILS' e-content collections (eRead Illinois and BiblioBoard), training libraries and Illinois residents on the use of e-content, developing new ways for libraries to market the collections to their communities, and performing data-driven collection development by analyzing the usage patterns of our e-content titles. Please join us in welcoming Anna to the RAILS team!