

19 October 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Trustees

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Board diversity and representation

At the September meeting, the board discussed board diversity and representation and agreed to continue the discussion at the October meeting to provide opportunities for those absent in September to also discuss this important topic.

Some highlights of the September discussion (according to my recollections and notes, I am sure there were others) were:

The structure of board representation is defined in Illinois statute and in our bylaws so changes will have to be discussed with the state library and IHLS, as well as approved by a two-thirds majority of our board.

There was considerable discussion about the needs of academic, school and special libraries and whether changing board representation would increase knowledge about these types of libraries and help in raising their profile generally, increase their use of RAILS services and provide opportunities for advocacy with funders. A suggestion was made that perhaps a different solution to this issue would be to highlight the role and importance of academic, school and special libraries at RAILS board meetings and other RAILS events to increase awareness of their importance and also increase multitype collaboration.

It was also pointed out that some of the items on the board agenda may not be of interest to academic, school, and special libraries. RAILS will make a greater effort moving forward to broaden our agenda to include more reports about or from academic, school and special libraries and to provide the appropriate context for agenda items as they affect all types of libraries. This month, our agenda features a report from Laura Turner and Dan Bostrom about special libraries.

There were a few suggestions from the public library representatives on our board as well. A suggestion was made that since there is not a specified seat for public library staff, public library staff interested in running for the RAILS Board all vie for the same at large seats as staff

from other types of libraries, and perhaps we could look at changing the law to have eight public library seats in general instead of eight seats for public library trustees. One of our public library trustees pointed out that since there is such a wide variety of public libraries of different sizes and in different financial situations, perhaps the number of public library representatives on the board is valid.

There is no doubt that this is a complex situation with no one right answer. We will continue to discuss it at the October meeting.