

9 November 2018

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – November 2018

Strategic Plan next steps

Now that the board has approved the updated strategic plan (thank you very much), I want to lay out some next steps.

We are working on some marketing/communication tools to ensure an effective roll out to members. We will create a variety of print and online pieces that will highlight different aspects of the plan and use infographics and fun visuals to tell the story of the plan in interesting and effective ways.

We will also be revising some of our reports to the board so that they are organized by strategic plan goals. This will help the board, members and other stakeholders to see and monitor progress in achieving our goals.

In January, we will present a progress report on some of the strategic plan goals and the FY 2019 operational plan that we submitted to the state library with our budget last June.

Imagine video shoot at Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin

The content strategy firm [Imagine](#) has been doing some pro bono work for us as part of our goal to help libraries tell their stories. The work has been focusing on the importance of libraries in general and of universal service in particular. They wrote a script portraying children discovering the library and all it can offer using the Gail Borden Public Library as the focal point. Some photos of the shoot are included in this report. When the video is completed, we will show it at a board meeting. I think it will be a great advocacy tool.

Sparks podcast with Veronda

Veronda and I did a podcast before she left for her new position at Califa. We talked about changes in RAILS since she joined us in 2013; major accomplishments; some disappointments; and what's in store for her in the future.

Member engagement activities

I visited the Barrington Area Library District on November 7 to meet with their director Jesse Henning. Jesse has been at Barrington for about six months; previously he worked in Colorado and Ohio. We talked about Find More Illinois and possible benefits to Barrington, as well as training ideas that he would find helpful.

ILA strategic planning focus groups

The Illinois Library Association is currently in the midst of strategic planning. They have scheduled several focus groups and meetings around the state to get feedback from as many stakeholders as possible. You can find the full schedule at

<https://www.ila.org/events/calendar>.

There is one at our Burr Ridge office on November 14 at 3 pm.

ILA is a major partner with RAILS in many important areas including continuing education, advocacy and leadership on important issues affecting all Illinois libraries. It is very important that RAILS members, staff and board participate in the ILA strategic planning effort. I hope you can attend one or more of the meetings to provide input and to hear what our members say.

Reminder: there is no board meeting in December.

Next meeting will be January 18, 2019. The meeting is a week earlier than usual due to the ALA midwinter conference in Seattle January 25 through January 28.

Photos from Gail Borden video shoot



Latest RAILS Project News

E-Resources

School librarians attending the November Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) conference showed great interest in [BiblioBoard Library](#) and the Axis 360 collection on [eRead Illinois](#). RAILS staff answered many questions about both platforms at our exhibit booth (see more details in the Member Engagement section of this report). BiblioBoard Library is particularly well suited for school libraries, as it includes classic titles and primary sources, allows unlimited simultaneous use, and is available at no charge for anyone within Illinois.

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, presented on Axis 360 and BiblioBoard Library at the RSA quarterly users group meeting, held on November 1 at Morton Public Library District. She has also done recent Axis 360 training sessions for Ransom Memorial Public Library (in Altona), Wyoming Public Library District, and Havana CUSD #126.

Find More Illinois

Auto-Graphics has proven to be a good partner on [Find More Illinois](#). In addition to sponsoring the RAILS reception during the Illinois Library Association conference as we reported last month, Auto-Graphics is working with RAILS, SWAN, and EBSCO on developing patron authentication via OpenAthens (an identity and access management service) and has incorporated a number of suggestions from RAILS for potential 2019 enhancements, including issues mentioned by multiple libraries and those deemed as having broad appeal. Thanks to Find More Illinois pilot participants, especially University of Illinois at Chicago, for their feedback and suggestions for future software enhancements.

Recruitment for additional Find More Illinois participants continues. Fall in-person demonstrations have been completed; webinars will be offered on November 8 and December 11.

On October 30, Jane Plass met with Leslie Bednar (Illinois Heartland Library System Executive Director) and other IHLS staff to demonstrate Find More Illinois and discuss possible future statewide implementation. We agreed that libraries not in IHLS' SHARE catalog consortium can join now if they wish. Since implementation for libraries belonging to SHARE is more complex, we will revisit this topic in early 2019 to give IHLS staff time to explore the issues and talk to their members as needed.

Other Highlights

Continuing Education (CE)

Elevate Preconference Helps Develop Leadership Skills

During our strategic plan revision process, members told us how important it was for RAILS to help all levels of library staff develop leadership skills. The Illinois Library Association's "Elevate: Leading with Purpose" preconference provided an excellent opportunity to help meet this need.

The statewide event built upon the inaugural Elevate workshop held in April. Sixty-five people from around the state participated in the all-day, intensive session facilitated by Dr. Adam Goodman of Northwestern University's Center for Leadership. In addition to sponsoring the event, 10 RAILS staff members took part, either as participants, mentors, and/or planning committee members.

Unlike more traditional leadership training offerings, Elevate helped participants discover *why* they lead. Post-event feedback was very positive. As one attendee put it: "We often get bogged down in the day-to-day tasks we must do as leaders, managers, or directors. This preconference allowed me to step back and define what I do. I thought of it much like a strategic plan. You need to know who you are, then you need to determine where you want to go. Defining who we are as leaders (what I think of as my vision statement), helps chart the course to take to move forward."

RAILS Grants Help Bring More CE to More RAILS Members

RAILS offers grants to libraries, networking groups, and library consortia to support CE made available to all RAILS member libraries and of interest to a wide range of library staff. Two events, one recent and one upcoming, show the value of these grants in helping RAILS to fulfill our mission to offer continuing education to as many of our libraries as possible.

On November 15, the LACONI Circulation Services Section offered a program on "Improving Your Way to Success." Performers from the famed iO Theater taught valuable customer service skills, including communication and listening, thinking on your feet, conflict resolution, collaboration, and team building. The session was made possible through a [RAILS Continuing Education Event Grant](#) in the amount of \$2,000.

Also made possible through a CE event grant of \$2,500 is the December 7 [ATLAS Multi-Library Staff Day](#). The topic is "Serving Patrons with Different Ability Levels with the Disability Awareness Players." The interactive workshop will educate library staff on how to better serve patrons with disabilities. It also fulfills the continuing education requirement for the Illinois Public Library Per Capita Grant, an annual grant that helps all Illinois public libraries improve and increase library service.

Member Engagement

Engaging School Library Staff at AISLE Conference

The RAILS team was in full force at the November Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) conference in Tinley Park. Approximately 159 attendees visited our booth to hear about RAILS services of interest to school libraries. We also had special booth hours for attendees to learn more about [Find More Illinois](#), [BiblioBoard](#), and [eRead Illinois](#). One school chose to schedule a targeted, one-on-one session with Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager.



School library staff from both RAILS and the Illinois Heartland Library System stopped by the booth to chat, since many of our services are available statewide (including BiblioBoard and Find More Illinois).

RAILS Meets With School Library Group

In October, Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, met with members of the Chicago Area School Library Network (CASLN). The group recently became a chapter of AISLE. RAILS is working closely with CASLN to help them become more familiar with RAILS resources available to them on the networking group level as well as on the individual school library level.

Online Site Visits with School Libraries Extend RAILS Outreach Efforts

RAILS has taken a new approach to connecting with our school libraries, particularly those located outside the Chicago metropolitan area. In early October, we began contacting schools to offer to either meet with them in person at the AISLE conference (see above) or to meet online via GoToMeeting.

Out of the 61 school libraries contacted, eight have scheduled online meetings thus far. These half-hour sessions include discussions on delivery, continuing education, e-books, deals & discounts, and more.

RAILS Member Visits to Moline Area

RAILS visited three libraries in the Moline region in late October. Highlights included learning about a gaming club at Clover Public Library District in Woodhull and learning about the Galva Public Library District's (Bishop Hill) book drop.

First RAILS Member Meetup at a School Library

The next RAILS Member Meetup is [Tuesday, December 4, 3:15-4:45 p.m.](#) at Franklin Elementary School in Moline. This will be the first meetup to take place at a school! This event is also special because the school experienced significant damage as a result of [a fire in September 2017](#). The school re-opened in September 2018. RAILS Board members and all library staff from all types of libraries are invited to the meetup.

RAILS Social Media Engagement Rising Steadily

In the past few months, RAILS has seen a steady increase in social media engagement. We use several metrics to track performance across social networks including followers, likes, and other key indicators. These statistics demonstrate that tactics adopted by the RAILS social media team have been very effective! Likes and follows for the two key platforms, Facebook and Twitter, are up, including a 43% rise in the Facebook weekly total reach compared to the first half of the year. Similarly, below is a graph showing Twitter likes over the past 10 months.

