

15 February 2019

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – February 2019

Promote, support, and expand resource sharing to optimize use of tax dollars and other funding and help libraries share resources to the fullest extent possible

Delivery contract FY 2020 update

As we have reported previously, we are working on the statewide delivery contract for FY 2020 and beyond. Since they reported to the board last fall, the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) has done a more complete analysis of delivery by including IHLS routes as well as RAILS. They have looked at optimal delivery hub sites, the optimal number of hubs, and possible efficiencies of cross-system delivery near the system borders.

At this point, we don't expect there to be major changes in FY 2020. However, I strongly believe that we need to make at least a five year plan for improving the efficiency and reducing the cost of delivery and have talked with Greg McCormick about this. We also need to think about capital investment that might help to automate aspects of delivery.

Explore More Illinois

We are continuing to add libraries and attractions to the *Explore More Illinois* program and are on track for an April 1 launch. Jessica Barnes will present a report to the board at the April meeting.

National/Statewide partnerships and projects

At the meeting, I will report on the e-book summit and SimplyE for Consortia, two national projects in which we are involved. There is a report in the packet on the e-book summit, and it is also part of the strategic plan/operational plan progress report.

SimplyE is an e-reader app that makes it easier to browse, borrow and read library e-books. It is an open source application developed by the New York Public Library (NYPL) that makes it possible for patrons to access all of a library's e-books in a consolidated place. You can read more about it [here](#).

SimplyE for consortia is a version of SimplyE designed for library consortia because the multiplicity of libraries, e-book vendors and library policies in consortia make e-book borrowing even more difficult to navigate than at a single library (even one as large as NYPL).

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

We have begun our campaign to help libraries tell their story. Mary will update the board at the meeting.

***Sparks* podcast**

Our latest *Sparks* broadcast featured Amanda Civitello and Katie McLean of the Waukegan Public Library talking about dealing with patrons and sexual harassment and how their library has supported staff.

***Dreams Take Flight* video**

The video is now posted on our website and available for all of our libraries to use. The premiere has been rescheduled to February 20 at 530 pm at the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin.

Help libraries be the best they can be

System membership standards

Data collection for the system membership standards is going well. As of the end of day, Friday, February 15, 184 libraries have submitted their information.

Member engagement

I have been on the road quite a bit this month. I attended ALA midwinter in Seattle at the end of January. I will report in detail at the meeting.

I attended 3 legislative meetups in Bloomington, Tinley Park and Galesburg. It was a great opportunity to talk with member library directors and legislators. I spoke with Representative William Davis who represents the 14th district which includes Harvey. Harvey has had many financial problems. I asked if we could meet to discuss Harvey's issues and some possible solutions.

I attended a great program at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries in the Art Institute. They have recently published a book, and now have a related exhibit, called “Chicago by the Book.” It was a fascinating look inside some of the special books about Chicago and Chicagoans housed in the library including Daniel Burnham, Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. I am sure you would all enjoy it. It was also a great opportunity to meet the library director, Douglass Letts.



Prepare libraries for the future

DPLA Fest

DPLA Fest is coming up in April, in Chicago. This event is sponsored by the Digital Public Library of America and offers programs about what is going on in the digital library arena – everything from e-books to GPS and maps to preservation and cultural heritage. The fest is on April 17 and 18 at the Chicago Public Library. You can register [here](#).

This is a great opportunity for all of us near Chicago to participate in this conference about critical issues for all types of libraries.

I have been part of the planning for a program that you will see entitled “The Indie Tidal Wave.” It is a collaboration among our own *Soon to be Famous* colleagues, Biblioboard – our partner Mitchell Davis - and Minitex, a peer and colleague organization of RAILS in Minnesota.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Needless to say, the general weather woes also afflicted RAILS services. On January 28 we closed Bolingbrook, Burr Ridge and Rockford. We did close all day, all centers and services, on Wednesday, January 30. We delayed opening on January 31. Also, on February 6 we had delayed openings in Coal Valley and Rockford.

While I was at ALA midwinter, I spent time in the Placement Center to talk with prospective job candidates about RAILS. We had a lot of interest and I made some good connections.

Our job postings for Resources and Programs Manager, Consulting and Continuing Education Specialist, and Data Coordinator and Research Analyst have all closed. We are now setting up interviews and hope to select candidates by the end of this month or early March.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing

Find More Illinois

Five more libraries went live on [Find More Illinois](#) after completing training during the week of February 4:

- Andalusia Township Library (PrairieCat)
- Colona District Public Library (PrairieCat)
- Deerfield Public Library (Standalone Sierra integrated library system)
- Eureka Public Library District (RSA)
- Pearl City Public Library District (PrairieCat)

Find More Illinois now includes [29 library agencies and 36 library buildings](#). Five more libraries are in the implementation process, and recruitment continues. Another introductory webinar was presented on February 11, and the next one is scheduled for March 11. Libraries can now join at any time; RAILS staff will work with each library to develop a customized implementation schedule.

Find More Illinois Scavenger Hunt Going Strong

Last month, we told you about our Find More Illinois Scavenger Hunt, which launched on January 28. The goal of this six-week Facebook campaign is to make people aware of all of the resources in the [Find More Illinois](#) (FMI) catalog and to get them interested in potential membership.

Each week, we issue a challenge to find specific items in the catalog and we will draw a winner from all entries for that week. Jamie Jones from Peoria Public Library won the first challenge to post a picture of a FMI record representing her favorite holiday. She received a FMI gift basket. In mid-March, a grand prize winner will be chosen to win a \$50 gift certificate.

Providing Access to Digital Content/E-Resources/Other Innovative Projects

RAILS Adds New Educational Content to BiblioBoard

RAILS added hundreds of e-books from two leading educational publishers to our BiblioBoard platform in January:

- The ABDO module includes fiction and nonfiction titles for students K-12, including graphic novel adaptations of classic stories, books about science, the humanities, art, and more.
- The Time for Kids module includes nonfiction readers and Teacher Created Materials. The focus is on science, math, and social studies. The collection also includes many Spanish language materials.

You can explore these modules (and many others) at <https://library.biblioboard.com/modules>. The decision to add this content was based on feedback RAILS received at our booth at the AISLE (Association of Illinois Library School Educators) conference last November. The response to these new additions has been very positive thus far.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Update

Baker & Taylor (B&T) redesigned the eRead Illinois Axis 360 website in November. We have received both positive and negative feedback from eRead members since that time. B&T has been very responsive to this feedback. They have already released one update to incorporate search filtering options to the homepage, and have several additional improvements planned for future releases. We met with the B&T team at ALA Midwinter last month and will continue to talk with them about other possible eRead Illinois improvements.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

ILDS Delivery Survey

RAILS and the Illinois Heartland Library System provide statewide delivery service through ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service) for libraries that are members of CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois). CARLI conducted their annual ILDS delivery satisfaction survey from January 14 – 28. A total of 110 out of a possible 141 libraries took the survey, and overall, survey responses were very positive.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

RAILS Member Meetup at Fondulac Library in East Peoria



On January 16, RAILS held a member meetup at Fondulac Public Library District to give members in the area an opportunity to network with each other and to discuss common issues and challenges.

Discussion topics included teen services, marketing/outreach, and motivating staff/coworkers. The event included a tour of the library. Eighteen staff members from RAILS libraries participated.

RAILS Member Meetup at Fondulac Library

On February 12, RAILS hosted a member meetup at the Hewes Library at Monmouth College. (RAILS Board member Michelle Simmons teaches at Monmouth College.) This was the first meetup to take place at an academic library and 13 people attended.

Upcoming RAILS Member Meetup

RAILS will host a meetup on Monday, March 18, at Hinsdale South High School in Darien. The event will include a presentation about Hinsdale South's partnership with Indian Prairie Public Library and a tour of the library. RAILS Board members are invited to attend and can [register for the meetup](#) on L2 (librarylearning.info).

RAILS and IACRL to Host Two Spring Networking Events

RAILS and the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL) are planning two networking events for academic library staff this spring. They will be similar to the very successful events held in November 2018 at Northwestern University and Prairie State College. (Over 50 people registered for these events!)

The spring events will focus on specific discussion topics, including equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), and helping academic libraries tell their story (to coincide with RAILS' 2019 campaign). Dates and locations will be announced soon.

RAILS Launches For-Profit/Small Academic Library Group

On January 23, RAILS held a kickoff meeting for the new For-Profit/Small Academic Library Networking Group. Currently, no networking group exists in Illinois to serve the needs of for-profit and small academic libraries. The group hopes to offer an email list, maintain an online presence, and offer in-person networking opportunities and communications.

For more information on this group, see the [RAILS For-Profit/Small Academic Library Networking Group](#) directory listing on the RAILS website.

RAILS Awards Three Partnership Grants

RAILS offers [partnership grants](#) to encourage our member libraries to collaborate with other partners on innovative programs and services. At least one project partner must be a RAILS member. We recently awarded grants for these three projects:

- Creation of Evanston Community Dementia Resource Center - Evanston Public Library, Dementia Friendly Evanston, Chicago Center for Cognitive Wellness, and Services for Adults Staying in their Homes (SASI)
- Bike the Trail Library to Library Project - Lillie M. Evans Library District, Toulon Public Library District, Peoria Heights Public Library, Dunlap Public Library District, Wyoming Public Library District, and Rock Island State Trail Park
- BreakOut EDU and You! Project using escape room kits to teach teens teamwork and critical thinking skills - Marist High School and Blue Island Public Library

See [more information](#) about these projects on the RAILS website.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story

Helping Libraries Tell Their Story Campaign

As a part of our [year-long campaign](#) to help our members tell their stories and promote their value more effectively to different stakeholders, RAILS is conducting a survey to gather more information on specific needs of all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special). All staff members at all RAILS libraries are invited to complete the survey by March 8. The RAILS Communications Team will talk more about the campaign at the February RAILS Board meeting.

Dreams Take Flight Video Receives Rave Reviews



As a part of our campaign to help RAILS libraries tell their stories, [Imagination](#), a Chicago content marketing firm created a short video as a pro bono project for us.

Dreams Take Flight at Your Local Library portrays children discovering the library and all it has to offer.

The video debuted on January 28 on the [RAILS website](#) and Facebook page and we have received very positive feedback from our members thus far. We will continue to publicize the video and to encourage members to use it in their storytelling efforts.

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

RAILS Continuing Education (CE) Highlights

RAILS held a “Levying Made Easy” workshop by James Rachlin of Meristem Advisors at the Burr Ridge service center on February 6. The session covered different aspects of budgeting and levying for both district and municipal libraries. These topics are among those most requested by public library directors when providing suggestions for RAILS CE. We had a tremendous response to the workshop and a number of members had to be placed on a waiting list. As a result, we plan on offering this workshop again in different parts of the RAILS service area.

Other RAILS CE events held during February include:

- “Steps to Delivering Difficult Performance Feedback” webinar, February 20 (presented by HR Source)
- “Cataloging Non-Traditional Items” webinar, February 26 (focusing on cataloging “Library of Things” resources such as mobile hotspots, game consoles, and other items)

Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights

March CE opportunities include:

- Opiate Users in the Library, [March 8](#)
- Paying Attention to Pay Equity, [March 21](#)

RAILS Board members are invited to attend these and any other upcoming RAILS CE events. You can register on L2 (librarylearning.info) by using the links above.

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service

Certification

The annual online certification process runs through March 31. All library system members *must* complete the process to qualify for continuing system services and grant programs from the Illinois State Library. Libraries are also required to complete the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Traffic Survey before completing certification. RAILS staff are working with member libraries to assist them as needed and to keep them informed.

As of February 11, 753 RAILS members of 1,282 total had completed their ILL Traffic Survey, for an overall completion rate of 58.74%. As of February 11, 592 RAILS members had completed certification, for an overall completion rate of 46.18%.

Developing Library Leaders

Directors University

Registration for the third annual [Directors University](#) opened on February 11 and runs through March 22. This week-long training initiative will again be held at the Illinois State Library in Springfield (June 3-7). Deirdre Brennan and Joe Filapek from the RAILS staff serve on the planning committee.

There are at least 35 new public library directors in the RAILS area since last year’s Directors University and we are again expecting a great turnout.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

RAILS Helping to Get Out the Count for 2020 Census

The 2020 Census is approaching and it will be very important for RAILS member libraries to help maximize participation throughout Illinois. Our representation in Congress, as well as federal funding, including [LSTA funding](#) that supports library system [delivery](#), [shared catalogs](#), and per capita grants, depend on an accurate census count.



During the January 17 RAILS Member Update, Mary Riseling, Complete Count Commission Program Administrator, and Joe Natale, the Illinois State Library's representative with the Complete Count Commission, discussed the census and how libraries can get involved. [This video of the member update](#) is queued up to the census discussion.

RAILS also has a [census page on our website](#) to alert libraries to the latest census developments. We will add additional resources as they become available.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

RAILS Visits Libraries in Peoria and Chicago Regions

RAILS visited the Chicago Public School District (CPS) and Metamora High School in January. We learned that CPS has an annual continuing education event at McCormick Place in Chicago in the summer and they will look for possible ways to involve RAILS in the event this year.

RAILS also visited Deer Creek District Library, which will hold a Family Bingo Night fundraiser on Friday, February 22.

RAILS Staff to Present at Kane County Institute Day, March 1

Kane County Institute Day provides professional learning opportunities for Kane County school library staff and teachers. This year's event will be held on March 1 at Rotolo Middle School in Batavia.

Two RAILS staff members have been invited to join the fun. Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, will present "E-Books and More! E-Content Services from RAILS," which will focus on eRead Illinois Axis 360 and BiblioBoard. Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, will present "10 Ways RAILS Can Enhance Your School Library," which will cover continuing education, delivery, groups discounts and more. [More information and registration.](#)