

Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) 2018–2022 Strategic Plan & FY2019 Operational Plan Progress Report January 2019

Introduction

Each May, the RAILS Board reviews and approves an operational plan to send to the Illinois State Library (ISL) for approval as part of our annual System and Area Per Capita Grant application for the upcoming fiscal year. (The application is a requirement RAILS must fulfill to be eligible to receive state funding from the Secretary of State’s Office through the State Library.) The operational plan outlines our work for the coming year and addresses how RAILS plans to meet the legal requirements for library systems outlined in the Illinois Administrative Code (23 Ill. Admin Code 3030.215).

The board approved the RAILS 2018–2022 Strategic Plan on September 28, 2018. The plan also outlines our work for the future, but it covers four years instead of one and provides a bigger picture view. When comparing the two documents, our strategic plan objectives are most similar to the goals specified in the operational plan. As a result, this progress reports highlights RAILS’ accomplishments in meeting strategic plan goals/objectives and FY2019 operational plan goals.

Because we completed the strategic plan after we submitted the operational plan, a few strategic plan objectives do not have a corresponding operational plan goal. We were prepared for this possibility, and noted in the operational plan that we would make changes to RAILS planning activities and programs/services based on “the extensive member feedback gathered during the strategic plan revision process.” In addition, since this report covers a limited time period, there will not be accomplishments for each strategic plan goal/objective or operational plan goal.

This progress report covers the time period of September 28 through December 31, 2018 to reflect the date when the board passed the strategic plan. In the future, RAILS will share similar progress reports with the board on a quarterly basis.

Accomplishments Related to Strategic Plan Goals/Objectives and FY2019 Operational Plan Goals

Strategic Plan Goal One: *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*

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
<p>Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond</p>	<p>Continue to promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS/Illinois libraries and encourage all libraries to share materials as freely and widely as possible</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ensure that all RAILS members are familiar with and follow administrative rules and other statutes/policies regarding reciprocal access, reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loan, and nonresident services</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Build cooperative relationships with partners and other stakeholders to expand resource sharing efforts throughout Illinois</p>	<p>--Worked with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to educate all system members about the importance of resource sharing</p> <p>--Worked with the Resource Sharing Committee to develop/update the RAILS resource sharing plan. The plan was approved by the RAILS Board on October 26, and by the Illinois State Library on November 9, and posted to the RAILS website.</p> <p>--Continued to work on projects designed to increase resource sharing on a national level, such as SimplyE and the E-Book Summit, as detailed elsewhere in this document</p> <p>--Provided ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America and Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. The RAILS Executive Director serves on the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub Board, which has been working on the April 2019 DPLAfest conference in Chicago and other related issues.</p>
<p>Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing</p>	<p>Lead and work with Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs), independent consortia, and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing of materials</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Improve discovery of library collections to improve resource</p>	<p>--Continued to grow and improve Find More Illinois (FMI) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting in-person presentations across the RAILS area and webinars • Widely promoting participation via regular <i>RAILS E-News</i> articles, at the October 18 RAILS Member Update, at conference exhibit booths, and at the October 9 RAILS reception at the Illinois Library Association conference

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
	<p>sharing statewide by helping libraries to organize their collections so materials can be located, retrieved and accessed in a timely manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting with the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) Executive Director and other IHLS staff to demonstrate FMI and to discuss possible future statewide implementation ● Working to set new libraries up on FMI; six libraries went live in November 2018 during the first expansion period ● Conducting 17 site visits with libraries participating in FMI ● Submitting software enhancement suggestions to Auto-Graphics (our FMI software vendor) and participating in the annual user group vote on enhancement priorities <p>--Offered RAILS Catalog Membership grants to help fund startup costs for potential LLSAP/consortia members. RAILS awarded a total of \$257,630.10 to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ida Public Library (PrairieCat) - \$5,485.00 ● PrairieCat (group costs for adding all 8 NIC libraries) - \$105,687.10 ● Harvard Diggins Library (PrairieCat) - \$5,410.00 ● Cherry Valley Public Library District (PrairieCat) - \$12,808.00 ● Nippersink Public Library District (PrairieCat) - \$11,480.00 ● North Suburban Library District (PrairieCat) - \$38,450.00 ● Talcott Free Library (PrairieCat) - \$8,635.00 ● Morton Grove Public Library (CCS) - \$31,195.00 ● Green Hills Public Library (SWAN) - \$38,480.00

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		<p>--Began providing support to three additional consortia after they successfully completed an application process to become RAILS LLSAPs. We now support six LLSAPs: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC), RSA, and SWAN. Approximately 549 RAILS libraries (individual buildings) participate in one of these LLSAPs.</p> <p>--Traveled to Sterling to meet with RRLC to follow-up on their LLSAP application and to discuss future plans and possible service enhancements</p> <p>--Hired RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator to help members with cataloging needs as detailed in Goal Five below</p> <p>--Held third annual in-service day for all consortial staff on November 2</p> <p>--Promoted training available through statewide Cataloging Maintenance Center via weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i></p>
<p>Work with the Illinois State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System, and other stakeholders to improve physical delivery services through streamlining and standardizing operations and evaluating alternative methods and best practices</p>	<p>Continue to provide the highest quality delivery service possible to all RAILS member libraries via a number of different delivery methods and based on need</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Work with ISL and IHLS to continue to implement recommendations from Illinois State Library Delivery Advisory Committee</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Collaborate with ISL, IHLS, CARLI, and other stakeholders to investigate changes to current</p>	<p>--Worked with RAILS libraries to count all outgoing delivery items during quarterly fine count period</p> <p>--Continued to expand the pilot program for libraries to report fine count statistics via L2 (librarylearning.info) rather than submitting more cumbersome paper forms</p> <p>--Met with the Illinois State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System, and representatives of LASA (Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis at Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville) to continue discussion of possible changes to current delivery structure</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
	<p>delivery structure in Illinois to make better use of state financial resources and achieve other efficiencies</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ensure accurate delivery data, including data on delivery routes and locations</p>	
<p>Develop and implement innovative projects to expand access to a wider variety of resources for Illinois residents, including providing access to digital content/e-resources and expertise</p>	<p>Expand access to e-books and e-book projects to strengthen individual libraries and help communicate the value of libraries</p>	<p>--Continued to partner with BiblioLabs to offer BiblioBoard resources to anyone in Illinois. Publicized offerings via weekly article in <i>RAILS E-News</i>, at conference exhibit booths, and via other means.</p> <p>--Purchased \$50,000 worth of additional content for BiblioBoard especially for school libraries. This was a follow-up to a survey conducted at the AISLE conference to determine what content would be most useful to schools.</p> <p>--Met with Mitchell Davis, President of BiblioLabs, to discuss improving access to BiblioBoard's OER (open educational resources) offerings to make them more visible</p> <p>--Gave presentation on Axis 360 (eRead Illinois) and BiblioBoard at RSA Quarterly Users Group meeting on November 1</p> <p>--Conducted Axis 360 training sessions for Ransom Memorial Public Library (in Altona), Wyoming Public Library District, and Havana CUSD #126</p> <p>--Met with MyMediaMall/OverDrive consortium members to discuss the possibility of RAILS providing infrastructure support, including possibly handling billing for the consortium</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		--Participated as a partner in the Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project's new manuscript contest
Use economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their customers than they would be able to afford on their own	Provide economies of scale for collaborative purchasing initiatives to help scarce member library dollars stretch as far as possible and to increase resource sharing	<p>--Heavily publicized Illinois State Library's Try-It! Illinois database trial for library staff and users to evaluate electronic resources for possible purchase</p> <p>--Continued to offer Public Web Browser (PWB) to members free of charge through December 28, 2019. PWB allows libraries to lock down web browsers and customize workstations for specific uses.</p>
Offer members a variety of opportunities to build collaborative relationships to share best practices, expertise, and to develop innovative solutions to common issues and challenges	Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of RAILS member libraries to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation	--Offered and widely publicized new partnership grants for RAILS libraries of all types to collaborate with other libraries, businesses, nonprofits, and/or government agencies. The first application deadline was November 16 and RAILS received 19 applications. RAILS recruited a working group of previous member multitype collaborative grant awardees to help evaluate the applications.
Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation	Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of RAILS member libraries to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation	<p>--RAILS held the following networking events from September 28--December 31:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 26, prior to board meeting in Coal Valley • November 6, co-hosted event at Northwestern University with Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL) • November 12, co-hosted event with IACRL at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights • November 15, co-hosted event with Special Library Association (SLA) Illinois chapter at Caterpillar library in Mossville <p>--Met with Chicago Area School Library Network (CASLN) group to discuss RAILS services for schools and how we can help with networking-related activities</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		<p>--Met with Lincoln Way Vertical Team group to discuss RAILS services for schools and how we can help them with networking-related activities</p> <p>--Met with Kankakee Area Library Association (KALA) group to discuss RAILS services and how we can help with networking-related activities</p> <p>--Met with Tri-County Director group to discuss RAILS services and how we can help them with networking-related activities</p> <p>--RAILS held the following member meetups from September 28–December 31 (staff from all types of libraries were invited):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 16, Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin • December 4, Franklin Elementary School, Moline. This was the first member meetup held at a school library

Goal Two: *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story*

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
<p>Help member libraries ensure that current/potential customers are aware of all of the programs/ services/resources the library has to offer</p>		<p>--Participated in Imagination video shoot at Gail Borden Public Library (Elgin). Imagination is a content marketing firm in Chicago and is doing pro bono work with RAILS to help our libraries tell their stories and to promote universal library service.</p> <p>--Drafted plan for 2019 campaign to help RAILS libraries tell their stories and promote their value more effectively.</p>
<p>Help member libraries prove their value to administrative bodies, funders, elected officials, etc.</p>		<p>--Year-long campaign to help member tell their stories (see previous item) will help meet this objective as well</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		--Began promoting February 2019 Illinois Library Association legislative meetups via weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i>
Advocate for and help members advocate for all libraries as they face funding and other challenges		--Provided “advocacy alerts” via <i>RAILS E-News</i> and website to help members advocate on important issues, including need to support continued reauthorization of Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) --Participated in Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee meetings to discuss upcoming legislation of importance to libraries; kept libraries updated on important legislative issues

Goal Three: Help libraries be the best they can be

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
Continue to provide continuing education (CE) to ensure ongoing staff development for all levels of staff at all types of libraries	Continue to develop, implement and evaluate a CE/consulting program that meets the changing needs of RAILS member libraries and that leverages partnerships and expertise within RAILS and among other organizations and partners	--Between September 28 and December 31, offered 13 CE events with approximately 615 total attendees --Offered CE event grants to individual libraries, networking groups, and consortia offering CE events of interest to a wide variety of library staff and open to all RAILS libraries. RAILS received and funded three applications by the November 30 deadline. --Promoted CE available to RAILS members from other organizations via weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i>
Ensure that all libraries are able to offer the best possible service to their community of users	Conduct ongoing, active review of RAILS membership to ensure that all members meet system standards and complete the certification process, to welcome new member libraries to strengthen RAILS as a	--Discussed revised system membership standards at October 18 RAILS Member Update (approximately 100 attendees) --Developed and tested data collection form to help determine impact of revised membership standards on RAILS libraries. Began publicizing requirement for all libraries to complete form

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
	<p>multitype library system, and to ensure current information on all member libraries</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Complete development of revised system membership standards and help libraries meet the new standards by offering training and other support</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Provide more opportunities for libraries to support the adult education needs of their customers</p>	<p>and consulting with members needing help. Developed ongoing communication plan to ensure 100% response by March 31, 2019 deadline.</p> <p>--Began preparing for the 2019 certification process by verifying library email addresses, writing promotional articles for future use on the website and in the <i>RAILS E-News</i>, and meeting with the Illinois State Library</p> <p>--Awarded \$2,000 RAILS CE Event Grant to LACONI for November 15 program teaching customer service skills.</p> <p>--Recorded <i>Sparks</i> podcast about Rockford Public Library's building project and envisioning sessions held with different community groups, including teenagers and the homeless. Project can serve as a model for other libraries pursuing building projects.</p> <p>--Several RAILS staff members participated in focus group sessions to provide input for the new Illinois Library Association strategic plan</p>
<p>Ensure the ongoing education of library leaders and the development of leadership skills for library staff.</p>		<p>--Sponsored and played leadership role in October <i>Elevate: Leading with Purpose</i> preconference at the Illinois Library Association conference. Ten RAILS staff members were involved in the event, either as participants, mentors, and/or planning committee members.</p> <p>--Participated in Elevate planning meetings as member of Leadership Steering Committee</p> <p>--RAILS held the following CE events related to leadership from September 28–December 31:</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession Planning workshop, October 30 • Library Director Bootcamp, November 5, 12, 19 • Compensation Conversations webinar, December 12 <p>--Assisted the newly-appointed Calumet Park Library Board by attending two board meetings and providing training materials</p>

Goal Four: Prepare libraries for the future

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
<p>Help libraries anticipate, understand, and respond to changing social issues and customer needs</p>		<p>RAILS offered the following CE events to help meet this objective from September 28–December 31:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting a Library Facility Security Assessment webinar, October 24 • Developing Diverse Children's And Young Adult Collections webinar, November 14 • Promoting Fairness and Belonging webinar, December 6 • Library Accessibility for Public Library Trustees webinar, December 10 <p>--Awarded \$2,500 RAILS CE Event Grant to ATLAS group for "Serving Patrons with Different Ability Levels" event</p>
<p>Partner with libraries and other stakeholders to foster an educated, engaged, and civil society</p>		
<p>Expand access to library resources and services by addressing issues related to unserved and underserved Illinois residents and continuing to work toward a statewide library card</p>	<p>Support access to information for all Illinois residents and the role of libraries in providing information</p>	<p>--Formed RAILS Board committee to address universal service issues</p> <p>--Had conference call with the Illinois State Library and IHLS to discuss potential impact of unserved residents using libraries to complete the 2020 census and how to remove any possible</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		barriers. (Federal funding to libraries depends on a complete count of Illinois residents.) --See also work with Imagination company under Goal Two

Goal Five: *Aim to be the best library system in the country*

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
Fully communicate and engage with members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	Fully engage with members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/services and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	--RAILS had exhibit booths at the following conferences to speak with members about RAILS programs/services specifically of benefit to them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 28 Health Science Librarians of Illinois Conference (approximately 50 booth visitors) • September 28 PrairieCat Users Group Conference (approximately 66 booth visitors) • October 10–11 Illinois Library Association Conference (approximately 425 booth visitors) • November 2-3 Association of School Library Educators Conference (approximately 159 booth visitors) --Discussed ways RAILS could help school libraries with Jacob Roskovensky, Past President of Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) --Planned/held quarterly RAILS Member Update on October 18 to share latest RAILS news and encourage members to share their library news. Approximately 100 attendees. --Offered copies of RAILS programs/services booklet to all member libraries to distribute to staff and board. Received requests from approximately 70 libraries.

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		<p>--Created a new outreach program for school libraries, RAILS School Library Tune-ups. The tune-ups provide one-on-one discussions of issues such as continuing education, interlibrary loan, e-books, etc. We scheduled/held tune-ups with 15 school libraries through December.</p> <p>--Created a new outreach program for library directors, RAILS New Directors Welcomes. These one-on-one online discussions offer the opportunity for new directors to discuss RAILS services and any other library needs. Directors from five libraries participated during the time period covered by this report.</p> <p>RAILS visited a number of libraries in person from September 28–December 31, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 library in Burr Ridge area • 2 libraries in Chicago area • 1 library in Joliet area • 1 library in LaSalle area • 5 libraries in Moline area • 2 libraries in Northbrook area • 1 library in Peoria area <p>RAILS also conducted the following individual online library visits from September 28-December 31:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 library in Chicago area • 1 library in LaSalle area <p>--Discussed relevant RAILS programs/services at all networking events and member meetups (see Goal One)</p>
Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and	Ensure that RAILS is meeting member needs in the most effective way possible	--Surveyed attendees of all RAILS CE programs held from September 28–December 31. Will analyze and use feedback to plan future CE events.

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
<p>are helping to create the best possible future for all of our libraries</p>		<p>--Sent pre-visit survey to all libraries visited from September 28–December 31 to determine what topics to emphasize on visit. Sent post-visit survey to all libraries visited to determine usefulness of visit and follow-up actions.</p> <p>--Surveyed attendees of RAILS member meetups held from September 28–December 31 and will use feedback when planning future events</p> <p>--Tracked social media metrics for RAILS Facebook and Twitter sites. There has been a steady increase in social media engagement, indicating that our tactics are working.</p>
<p>Recruit and engage a RAILS Board that is representative of the system membership and that creates and models best practices for board leadership</p>	<p>Ensure the smooth operation of RAILS by maintaining a strong infrastructure</p>	<p>--Had several conversations with the RAILS Board regarding ways to have more diversity on the board. Met with Richard Kong, Skokie Public Library Director, to discuss possible diversity initiatives.</p> <p>--Continued implementing board engagement recommendations, including adding board development topics and service of the month presentations to every board agenda</p> <p>--Revised format of monthly board report to more closely align with RAILS strategic plan initiatives. (Board will see new format in January.)</p>
<p>Ensure that all aspects of the RAILS organization use and model best practices in all that we do</p>		<p>--Introduced 2018–2022 RAILS Strategic Plan which focuses on moving RAILS and our member libraries forward and helping them to be the best they can be</p> <p>--Worked on updating the RAILS Employee Handbook to reflect a friendlier, more positive tone; better organization; and incorporation of updated policies, including the new RAILS policy on family leave. We completed a revised draft of the</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
		handbook in late November and sent it to HR Source for their review and comments.
<p>Deliver on the promise of organizational excellence by being agile, innovative, future-oriented, and member-focused</p>	<p>Attract, retain, develop, and reward a superb RAILS staff and foster a collaborative culture that seeks continuous improvement</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Maintain a robust technology infrastructure to support RAILS operations, member services, and member communication efforts</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Make changes to RAILS facilities to insure compliance with all building codes and continue to reduce RAILS' physical footprint as possible</p>	<p>--The RAILS strategic plan referenced above helps meet this objective as well.</p> <p>--Rolled out new RAILS logo suggesting an infinity symbol to indicate that RAILS programs/services are continually progressing</p> <p>--Re-examined RAILS staffing upon the departure of key staff to determine what skillsets were needed to best meet the current needs of RAILS members. Began recruiting for these new skillsets.</p> <p>--Hired RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator to develop ongoing basic cataloging skills curriculum for library staff and to develop other cataloging services</p> <p>--Developed and began beta testing a new module for the RAILS customer relationship management (CRM) software to better track and support participation in the eRead Illinois Axis 360 shared collection</p> <p>--Continued to upgrade, streamline, and replicate key elements of our technological infrastructure to the datacenter in Springfield, to ensure consistent high levels of service and continued operations in the case of local outages</p> <p>--Met to discuss East Peoria service center space needs</p>
<p>Engage in innovative projects on a statewide, national and international level and help RAILS</p>		<p>--Continued follow-up work on national E-Book Summit, including writing report on the June 2018 summit and working with the American Library Association on next steps</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Plan of Service Goal	Accomplishments
members model these projects for their community of users		<p>--Continued to provide support and leadership as a partner in the SimplyE project for consortia. Recruited the Pinnacle consortium as a beta-tester. Continue to work on recruiting a standalone library for the beta test.</p> <p>--Continued to participate in Flexible API STandard for E-content NISO (FASTEN), a working group of the National Information Standards Organization</p>
Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources to ensure maximum benefit to member libraries, library users, and Illinois taxpayers	<p>Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources and participate in activities to help Illinois libraries manage their resources more effectively</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Ensure the smooth operation of RAILS by maintaining a strong infrastructure</p>	<p>--RAILS provides ongoing, excellent stewardship of our financial resources as reported at monthly board meetings.</p>
Maintain a research and development role to provide leadership and innovation to help members provide the best possible service to their customers		