



18 July 2019

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – July, 2019

Every month, I prepare this report to the board to highlight projects, issues, meetings and member outreach that I have worked on or been involved with during the previous month. We also provide the “This Month at RAILS” report to provide the board with an overview of major activities, new projects or special events that have occurred since the last board meeting. These reports are organized according to the goals of our strategic plan and are designed to keep the board informed about how we spend our time and tax dollars to help libraries. We also provide “service of the month” reports at every board meeting so that we can delve more deeply into specific aspects of RAILS services.

We have overhauled and tweaked these reports many times over the years; please feel free to make suggestions, ask questions, etc., as we are always looking to make them better.

Welcome to our newly elected board members! I know I speak for RAILS staff when I say a heartfelt thank you to all of you for volunteering your time to lead and assist in the work of RAILS to help libraries throughout Illinois.

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

Access to e-books and other e-resources

We are continuing to work with Baker and Taylor, our e-book vendor, on improvements to the Axis 360 app and the user experience in general. We expect to see major progress by the end of the summer.

Leila Heath attended a meeting in Champaign at the CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) offices to discuss a partnership between CARLI, the state library and the library systems for brokering purchase of electronic resources. We hope that this large partnership will bring better discounts to Illinois libraries.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Campaign to tell the Library story

Our campaign is launching as is the website “My Library is...”

We have gotten a lot of interest from libraries in this campaign. It is obvious there is a big need for this kind of assistance from RAILS. You will find extensive information about this campaign in the “This Month at RAILS report.”

Help libraries be the best they can be

Diane Foote, Executive Director of ILA, and I met to talk about alignment of RAILS and ILA activities and ways we can partner. ILA’s new strategic plan provides a clear direction for ILA and will help us to partner and avoid duplication or gaps of service. We discussed the need for a statewide conversation about and plan for continuing education. We also discussed working together with the state library and IHLS on implementation of standards and best practice documents.

Prepare libraries for the future

As a member of the ILA Public Policy Committee, I will be attending the annual ILA orientation day July 24 in East Peoria. I anticipate discussion of ILA’s strategic plan and am very interested in how RAILS and ILA can work even more closely together in the future.

Aim to be the best library system in the country**Employee Handbook**

A major project for the board in FY 2020 will be review and approval of changes to our Employee Handbook. A staff team – Jane Plass, Jim Kregor, Mary Hudspeath, Sam Daley, Emily Fister and I - have been working on this revision for many months. It has been reviewed by HR Source also to ensure it is up-to-date, complete and in compliance with all laws and regulations.

Since this is a policy manual, the Policy Committee will review the entire manual over the course of multiple meetings. It will then be brought to the board.

This is a very significant revision. We have made many policy changes and additions over the past few years so it was really necessary for us to take a complete and in depth look at the manual to be sure it was consistent. We have also reorganized it to make it easier to use. Because of these wholesale changes, it won't be possible to do a "red lined" version; instead, we will summarize changes and the reasons for them.

Staff In-service day

On July 25, we will hold our annual staff in-service day at Illinois Central Community College in East Peoria. This year, we will have Raising Awareness on Workplace Harassment training for our entire staff, as recommended by our attorneys, and various workshops for staff to choose from on topics such as e-content, IT update, introduction to data analysis, My Library Is Campaign, etc.

Staff has told us in past years that what they enjoy and need the most is learning about various RAILS projects so that they can be knowledgeable when asked questions by members.

This Month at RAILS – July 2019

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing



Library patrons can use [Find More Illinois](#) to search multiple Illinois library catalogs at once. Patrons from participating libraries can log in to place requests and pick up items at their local library. RAILS has been working with Auto-Graphics (the vendor of the SHAREit software that runs Find More Illinois) on two software development projects:

- Patron authentication via OpenAthens (an identity and access management service) to meet SWAN's needs. (SWAN is one of the shared catalog consortia RAILS supports.)
- Patron Lookup functionality to support reciprocal borrowing.

Both development projects have progressed to the point where we are planning testing. Both are based on Auto-Graphics' version 6 code base, so progress hinged on RAILS upgrading to version 6. That upgrade was done the first weekend in June.

The pilot stage of Find More Illinois officially ended as of June 30. June also saw three more libraries go live: Addison Public Library (with a standalone Sierra integrated library system), Creston-Dement Public Library District (a PrairieCat member), and Normal Public Library (an RSA member). Five more libraries are currently in implementation.

RAILS Catalog Membership Grants

Applications are open for FY 2020 RAILS Catalog Membership Grants. The grants are intended to increase membership in RAILS' Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs) by funding startup costs for any RAILS member library that isn't currently an LLSAP member.

Application deadlines for FY 2020 are October 15, 2019, and April 15, 2020. More information is available on the [RAILS website](#).

Consortial Staff In-Service Day

Staff at shared catalog consortia rarely have an opportunity to get together and exchange news and ideas, so RAILS hosts an annual in-service day for consortial staff. The next one is being planned for November 22.

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

Resolution on Digital Content Pricing for Libraries

The American Library Association (ALA) Council recently passed the “[Resolution on E-Book Pricing for Libraries](#).” The Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies’ Consortial E-Books Interest Group brought the resolution to council. RAILS Executive Director Deirdre Brennan is one of the leaders of this group and she helped draft the resolution.

The resolution calls for ALA to create a joint working group to address library concerns and the development of a public awareness campaign. It came on the heels of Blackstone Audio placing a moratorium on sales of library content and Hachette replacing its perpetual ownership model for libraries with two-year access for e-books and digital audiobooks. Both of these restrictive actions have caused concern for libraries about their ability to provide access to digital content.

BiblioBoard Update

RAILS partners with [BiblioBoard](#) to offer access to thousands of e-resources to anyone in the state of Illinois without charge and without needing a library card or login. We continue to work on rolling out BiblioBoard’s self-publishing module statewide (see [June 2019 report](#)). It will be modeled after Minitex’s [MN Writes MN Reads](#), which is a suite of resources that support local authors with online creation and publishing tools.

We are naming our Illinois self-publishing project “Inkie,” and are currently working on a logo. We introduced our members to Inkie at the July 18 RAILS Member Update. We plan to have a soft launch in September, with a larger push in October – just in time for Illinois library conference season and [NaNoWriMo](#) (National Novel Writing Month).

We also had a great meeting with the BiblioBoard team at the ALA conference in June. Among other things, we discussed how to make BiblioBoard more accessible to school-aged users.

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, will give a presentation about using BiblioBoard in schools at the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) conference on October 12.

eRead Illinois Update

The [eRead Illinois](#) statewide e-resources collection includes Baker & Taylor’s Axis 360 platform for RAILS members and Illinois Heartland Library System non-SHARE members. RAILS greatly subsidizes costs and negotiates much better pricing than any library could on its own.

RAILS had a very productive meeting with B&T at the ALA conference. The company assured us that they’re working harder than ever to improve the Axis 360 app and the user experience of the platform across all devices. They have since provided us with several very encouraging screenshots of recent development work.

eRead Illinois membership renewals are almost complete and four libraries opted not to renew their membership. We recently welcomed and are in the process of on-boarding three more public libraries, three new school libraries, and an academic library.

Leila Heath, Library Resources and Programs Manager, and Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, will give a presentation about the eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection development strategy at the ERMN (Electronic Resources Minnesota) Conference on October 4.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

Opportunities for Libraries to Collaborate on Census 2020 Activities

The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching! It will be very important for 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.



RAILS will offer a variety of activities in the coming months to help libraries work together to “get out the count” in Illinois. We also have a [page on our website](#) where libraries can find updated information on the census.

Census Roundtables

This summer, RAILS will hold two online roundtables on Census 2020 via Zoom:

- Wednesday, July 31, 1-2 p.m. - [Census 2020 Programming](#)
- Thursday, August 15, 10-11 a.m. - [Census 2020 Services and Resources](#)

All Illinois library staff members are invited to attend. Each roundtable will feature brief presentations followed by a discussion via text. Both roundtables will be archived for future viewing. RAILS Board members are invited to register using the links above.

New RAILS Email List to Discuss Census 2020 Issues

In response to many requests from our member libraries, RAILS created a new email list for library staff to discuss Census 2020 issues. Members can subscribe on the [Members>Networking>Email Lists](#) page on our website.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



RAILS Receives Positive Feedback on New Campaign Website

RAILS has received very favorable feedback thus far on the launch of our *My Library Is...* website (mylibraryis.org). The site coincides with our campaign by the same name to help libraries of all types and sizes to tell their stories and articulate their value to different stakeholders, including current and potential customers, library administration and funders, colleagues, legislators, voters, and others.

A major feature of the site is the [Sharing Showcase](#), where libraries throughout Illinois can share stories, talking points, videos, brochures, press releases, marketing plans, and other tools/methods they have used to tell their stories. As we talk with libraries about how RAILS can best help them through the campaign, many request a place where they can share ideas and best practices. The showcase is a big step toward meeting that need.

Immediate goals include adding more talking points to the site that different types of libraries can use to tell their stories and to justify the need for more support and/or funding for their library or for all libraries.

RAILS Data Series a Big Hit with Members!

RAILS has been offering a variety of continuing education events related to “Making the Most of Your Library Data” as part of our *My Library Is* campaign. Over 500 RAILS members registered for the June three-part webinar series presented by Ann Emery of Depict Data Studio. This series focused on how to better utilize and present data to library stakeholders and provided tips on working with spreadsheets, data visualization tools, and designing reports.

RAILS received very favorable feedback on the series, including these comments:

- *I did not know much about Excel and now I feel much more prepared.*
- *Ann K. Emery was a great presenter!*
- *I learned where to look for shortcuts and found a few things I can use on the job when I use Excel.*

All three webinars were recorded and are available in the [RAILS CE Archives](#).

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights

[Creating a Solution-Centered Team](#)

Friday, August 9, 9:30-12:30 p.m.

Macomb Public Library

Michelle Peterson will present her fun, enlightening, and entertaining take on customer service and motivation to help get library staff inspired and focused on the "how" rather than the "who" of any issue.

[Notary Training](#)

Wednesday, August 21, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Acorn Public Library District

This workshop will teach library staff how to properly execute the responsibilities of an Illinois notary public.

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service

Update on Project to Replace L2

As mentioned in our January board report, RAILS was awarded special grant funding from the Illinois Secretary of State, through the Illinois State Library, to replace [Library Learning \(L2\)](#). L2 has evolved into a critical tool for library staff and library systems across Illinois, and the platform can no longer support evolving needs.

We recently posted the [RFP for the L2 replacement platform](#) on the RAILS website. We are seeking a vendor to design and develop a modern, accessible, and highly complex platform made up of a statewide directory of libraries as well as calendar and room management, with excellent search and reporting functions, the ability to serve as an authentication platform, and a robust API.

We have also chosen a logo for the new platform. See sneak peek below!



Developing Library Leaders

Directors University Has Big Impact on Library Directors

The third annual Directors University was held at the Illinois State Library (ISL) in June. RAILS is heavily involved in the planning for this event, which provides training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors. A total of 51 new directors attended, and 30 were from RAILS libraries.



RAILS has been analyzing the evaluations of the event. In response to the statement, “Applying what I learned will help improve library services to the public,” 95% strongly agreed; 88% strongly agreed that “I feel more confident as a result of what I learned.”

Comments included: “The love and confidence for my job has increased even more...The information received is invaluable to my little library,” and “I’m not sure there is any part of my library and how I do my job that won’t be impacted by my week at DU! It was an amazing experience!”



Upcoming Trustee Training Opportunities

RAILS partners with United for Libraries to provide [online training](#) for Illinois library trustees. RAILS also offers additional in-person training opportunities, including upcoming training by nationally-recognized trainer and triple-certified parliamentarian Nancy Sylvester.

“Keys to Running a More Successful Board Meeting” will be held on:

- [Saturday, August 10](#), 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., River Forest Public Library
- [Saturday, October 19](#), 2019, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Bloomington Public Library

Attendees will learn about board fundamentals, governing documents, fiduciary duty, and the parameters of the board/staff relationship. The sessions are identical. New trustees are welcome, as well as current trustees and library directors who would like a review of board essentials and parliamentary procedure. Register for your date of choice using the links above.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

Member Visits

RAILS visits as many of our member libraries as possible each year, to acquaint them with system programs/services, to answer any questions they have about RAILS, and to find out what they are up to. We focus on libraries we have not visited in the past two years.

In early July, we visited four public libraries in the Rockford area. Highlights include:

- Watching the WHBF Quad Cities profile on the Friends of the Lanark Public Library
- Learning about Winnebago Public Library's recent slime program
- Finding out more about Chadwick Public Library's recent visit from U.S. Representative Cheri Bustos
- Hearing about Ida Public Library's (Belvidere, IL) transition from NIC (Northern Illinois Cooperative) to [PrairieCat](#).

July 18 RAILS Member Update Recap

RAILS holds quarterly sessions to update our members on the latest RAILS news, and to give them a chance to share their library news. Members can attend at one of many [videoconference locations](#) in the RAILS area, or via one-way live streaming video (RAILS Live). Usually, at least half of attendees participate via RAILS Live.

At the time of this writing (July 17), 105 members were registered. Topics included RAILS' *My Library Is* campaign, our [grant to recreate L2](#), [Explore More Illinois](#), Census 2020 activities, and more. The recorded session is available for viewing on the [RAILS YouTube page](#).

RAILS at SWAN Expo August 16

[SWAN](#) is one of the shared catalog consortia supported by RAILS. The SWAN Expo will be August 16, at Moraine Valley Community College. This all-day event features a variety of speakers, sessions, and library vendors.

RAILS will have a table at the expo, and Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, will be on hand to discuss RAILS programs/services and to answer questions. These types of events provide us with an excellent opportunity to talk to a number of our members all in the same place.

RAILS Staff News

RAILS at 2019 WiLSWorld in Madison

RAILS had a presence at the [2019 WiLSWorld](#) conference, held July 23 – 24, in Madison, WI. WiLS (formerly Wisconsin Library Service) hosted the conference, which was open to Illinois libraries. Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, served on the planning committee and attended the event.