

20 September 2019

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – September, 2019

I was on vacation September 3 through 19 in Italy. As a result, my report is definitely briefer than usual. But, the “This Month at RAILS” report more than makes up for my brevity so I refer you to that report for an excellent overview of RAILS activities in September. Thanks to the RAILS team as always for their stellar work in moving projects forward.

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

In your packet, you will find recent articles related to publisher embargoes on ebook sales to libraries. As you will recall from our discussion about this topic at our last meeting, publisher embargoes are a growing problem for libraries.

We have scheduled a meeting with representatives of several e-content consortia on September 30 to discuss these publisher restrictions.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

The ILA and AISLE conferences are coming up in October. Both will take place at the Tinley Park conference center. I hope to see many board members at the conferences. RAILS will have a booth at both conferences and, as always, we hope and expect to be a big draw in the exhibit hall! These conferences are a great opportunity for RAILS staff and board members to meet with RAILS members.

The *My Library Is...* campaign will be a big focus of the RAILS exhibit booth.

Help libraries be the best they can be

I will be meeting with Dee Runnels on September 26 in Moline. There will be a networking even before the board meeting on the 27th in Coal Valley.

As is usual in September, the board agenda includes both the Annual Report which we submit to the State Library on September 30 and the annual audit. The narrative portion of the Annual Report is included in your packet. The board officially accepts the annual report and recommends its submission to the State Library.

Dan Berg of Sikich, our audit firm, will attend the meeting from Burr Ridge to answer questions about the audit.

Also, Julie Tappendorf will attend the meeting from Burr Ridge. She will give us an overview of the various privacy issues that have arisen lately in libraries.

Prepare libraries for the future

A huge and unexpected September project was the Census grant application to the Illinois Department of Human Services. We expect to hear about whether our proposal will be funded by October 4.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

The October board meeting will be held at the New Lenox Public Library. We are planning an Open House before the board meeting for members to say congratulation and farewell to Jane Plass. Details will be forthcoming!

Jane's official retirement date is November 15, 2019.



OUR PRINCIPLES / NEWS / WHO WE ARE / PROJECTS / CONTACT US

News

Two Posts Call Out Amazon and Macmillan

August 29, 2019

Andrew Albanese at Publishers Weekly [has reported](#) on Bibliotheca's Tom Mercer's [open letter](#) to librarians. Mr. Mercer writes that Amazon is using data it collects from library e-book and audio use (through its arrangement with OverDrive) to suggest libraries are costing publishers revenues: "As long as data is shared with Amazon by library users, Amazon will spin that data to create concern, and publishers will be forced to alter their digital library lending models or risk losing key authors."

Mercer argues that libraries should pressure vendors (okay, yes, it is really "vendor" and not "vendors") to drop data sharing with Amazon: "I think libraries can respond in a few ways. First, they can pressure their existing vendors to terminate relationships or refuse to share data with Amazon. If Amazon won't sell their content to libraries, then why should libraries share their data with Amazon? Second, they can appeal to ALA to engage authors the same way they engage publishers and demonstrate how digital lending contributes to the discovery and accessibility of their works. The book ecosystem starts with authors

and we need to ensure that they understand the value libraries provide. It is also advisable to consider joining the efforts of the Association of American Publishers, who are currently pressuring the Federal Trade Commission to monitor Amazon. “

Albanese explores the ramifications of Mercer’s statement comprehensively and his article is well worth a read. Your RF correspondent is cited in the article: “Short answer, no, I wouldn’t want OverDrive to give up their Amazon connection—even though I think Tom Mercer’s views have enough merit that I might wish OverDrive would.” Yes. While I don’t think OverDrive dropping Amazon is the best way to start, I do think Mercer makes many good points. So here’s a longer answer:

I don’t like Amazon in our sandbox. We tout SimplyE as being a more private option for library users because Amazon never sees any data—but we then have OverDrive libraries hesitate to deploy because Amazon users are left out. I’m not sure a figure of 23-24% Kindle use in OD is completely accurate because I don’t think OD is separating out true Kindle use (on e-ink Kindles) from tablet and phone use with the Amazon app. Amazon users know this way of getting content, so they continue to use it even though there are more private (and I would argue better) options on their devices. I’d love to convert library users away from Amazon, and I’d also love to win the lottery and spend my life traveling. Most likely ain’t gonna happen. It is more likely that many Kindle users would drop the library if that format is taken away. People come into libraries with e-ink Kindles and want to know how to get content.

What I’d like to see (scenarios get more likely to happen the farther down we go):

- Libraries nationally adopt SimplyE, wean library users away from Amazon, and foreground the library as content provider—we should seek EPUB 3 as the gold standard for libraries and fight against all proprietary formats. How does that jive with my statement that we should not lose Kindle format? Oh, you expect consistency? Hey, I’ve said this scenario is unlikely, and practicality is the reason why with OD may not want to lose Kindle format. But Mercer is right—there are good reasons to do so. We should make our case, especially since

many users will have access to a tablet or phone, be familiar with apps, and likely not stuck on Kindle e-ink. But let's make the case directly with readers, and not through vendors.

- All library e-book vendors can provide Kindle/MOBI format titles and users get them directly from the library vendors without having to go to Amazon—level the playing field and increase privacy
- All library e-book vendors can offer Amazon format titles and we send Kindle users to Amazon—at least it's a level playing field, and we offer some people content in a format they are familiar with; also, Amazon makes a deal to have its “exclusive” content available in libraries. It's not like Bezos can't afford it.

Of course, none of these will happen (though the first option IS something we could and should do), so:

- Hold our noses and live with OverDrive's monopoly, but engage library readers and ultimately publishers on how libraries help authors, pointing out that Amazon is also part of their problem in a complex ecosystem and making a positive case for how libraries are good for readers and reading and so good for authors and publishers.

While I'm sympathetic to some of Tom's points, but some seem myopic. “Second, they can appeal to ALA to engage authors the same way they engage publishers and demonstrate how digital lending contributes to the discovery and accessibility of their works. The book ecosystem starts with authors and we need to ensure that they understand the value libraries provide.” Who are the authors going to believe, the ALA or their publishers? Look at the recent [Author's Guild statement](#) supporting Macmillan's restrictive changes. And of course, we probably don't need the case to new or non-best-selling authors that libraries are good for them. Authors with blockbusters sales may simply not care about libraries. They probably all love bookstores more than libraries anyway. Let's take our fight to READERS.

Thanks, though, Tom, for stating points that need to be considered and at least calling out Amazon for bogus claims.

Speaking of Macmillan, another article that is worth reading has appeared in *Computers in Libraries*: “[Publishers Are on a Collision Course With Libraries](#),” by Terry Ballard. Ballard reports that Macmillan CEO John Sargent . At Book Buzz, Ballard reports, Sargent said “Macmillan worked with libraries of all sizes for a year to solve the problem of libraries being so generous that they are killing sales for publishers and authors. The cooperating libraries seemed fine with the policy, so Macmillan executives were surprised at the ferocity with which it was greeted by public libraries in general.”

Ballard comments “Sargent was ignoring a basic fact of human psychology. The librarians who participated in Macmillan’s focus group were invested in the outcome. . . . The ones who found out from seeing his terse letter were understandably unhappy to read that libraries are being perceived as the enemy of publishing and that they are being forced to serve up healthy portions of frustration to their patrons.”

Ballard adds “For a policy that Macmillan claims is perfectly reasonable, it hasn’t exactly put it in lights.” Mr. Ballard, I’m surprised you heard him say anything. This is more public comment than anyone in the library world has gotten.

Ballard concludes “With mergers and acquisitions rampant, there are very few publishers left in the business. If four other major players decide this [restricting library access] is the answer they’ve been seeking, the results will make public libraries extremely unhappy. . . . I know that librarians are driven to get good information into the hands of their patrons as quickly and easily as possible. This usually was not seen as a bad thing.”

No doubt we will have to have many negotiations in a complex ecosystem to get to a better place than we are now, but, no, sharing information in a democratic society is not a bad thing. Do readers have to have credit cards to have access? Thanks, Mr. Ballard, for supporting libraries!

Advertising Sales & Support Associate - BookPage - Nashville, TN.

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Bibliotheca Calls Out Amazon for Meddling in the Library E-book Market

"There is only one company that has access to readers' digital retail purchases as well as users' digital library borrowing habits," wrote Bibliotheca's Tom Mercer in a message to librarians, "and that is Amazon."

By Andrew Albanese | Aug 27, 2019



Zero2Cool_DE via Creative Commons

For more than a year now, one of the worst kept secrets in the publishing world has been that Amazon shares information with publishers and authors that allegedly paints library e-book lending in a negative light. But in a message sent to library customers on August 27, Tom Mercer, senior v-p of digital products for library e-book vendor Bibliotheca, urged librarians to recognize and take that practice seriously, and to confront the challenges Amazon poses to libraries in the digital realm.

Citing Amazon's growing, decade-old publishing division, Mercer's message connects "evidence to suggest that in recent years, authors and agents have come to feel that the library market is eroding their revenue," with the recent negative developments in the library e-book market, suggesting the changes are likely due, at least in part, to "external pressures" being applied to publishers.

"I think it's telling that Macmillan CEO John Sargent addressed his letter about the library model change to

Macmillan Authors, Macmillan Illustrators and Agents," Mercer wrote. "If authors and agents are voicing concerns about library lending, where are they getting their data from? I doubt it's from publishers, since a report on library lending is not part of an author's royalty statement. There is only one company that has access to readers' digital retail purchases as well as library users' digital library borrowing habits, and that is Amazon," Mercer writes, concluding that it is "highly probable" that Amazon is using its data to suggest to authors and agents that libraries are bad for their retail sales.

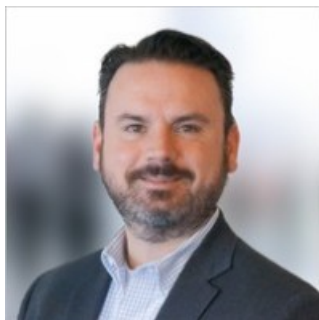
"This is a major concern that we need to understand and face together as an industry," Mercer writes. "As long as data is shared with Amazon by library users, Amazon will spin that data to create concern, and publishers will be forced to alter their digital library lending models or risk losing key authors."

Librarians have long long voiced their concern over Amazon's push into publishing, as Amazon digital content is generally not available to libraries; Amazon e-books are exclusive to the Kindle, and Amazon digital audiobooks are available exclusively through its Audible division. Further, Audible has been aggressively pursuing exclusive deals with major authors, as well as other publishers, such as Blackstone Audio, which recently struck a deal that denies public libraries access to new release audiobooks for three months.

In response to recent developments in the market, Mercer is urging librarians to "pressure their existing vendors" to terminate relationships, or to refuse to share data with Amazon.

"If Amazon won't sell their content to libraries," Mercer argues, "then why should libraries share their data with Amazon?"

Though Mercer doesn't mention any specific library vendors by name in in his message, the obvious inference is to market leader OverDrive, the only major library vendor that currently offers Kindle compatibility for e-books. Via OverDrive's Kindle partnership, when a library user wants to read a library e-book on the Kindle platform, the user is



Tom Mercer, SVP of Digital Products, Bibliotheca

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delivered to Amazon, which manages the loan, and, of course, captures the usage data generated. Amazon also charges OverDrive a fee for the transaction, though OverDrive officials could not comment or confirm any details of their business arrangement with Amazon.

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In a recent interview, OverDrive CEO Steve Potash told *PW* that he was sensitive to the growing concerns about Amazon's market power, and was aware of critical comments from OverDrive "competitors" that lack similar access arrangements with Amazon. But Potash stressed that OverDrive's Kindle compatibility was implemented at the request of librarians, who, Potash said, specifically asked for the ability to serve the "significant" percentage of U.S. readers who use the Kindle platform. And, he added, Kindle compatibility is opt-in at the patron-level, meaning that the choice of whether to read via the Kindle, or via another platform, including OverDrive's free Libby app, rests with the reader.

Mercer's message to librarians builds on previous statements he made at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference, in which he told *Library Journal* that Amazon was putting "pressure on publishers by sharing data with authors indicating libraries are the cause of lost digital retail sales." In response to those comments, an Amazon spokesperson conceded that Amazon does share data (including OverDrive e-book lending data) with publishers and authors, but denied the company was seeking to torpedo the library e-book market. "We believe that public library lending is very important to society," an Amazon spokesperson told *LJ*. "Publishers make their own business decisions regarding library lending."

In a separate conversation at the ALA Annual Conference, however, Mercer told *PW* that Bibliotheca did at one point try, unsuccessfully, to secure Kindle compatibility for its CloudLibrary service (as have other vendors for their services) and that Amazon's resistance to cutting deals with more library vendors suggests that Amazon does not, in fact, support library lending. "If they really did think library lending was a great model for them," Mercer told *PW*, "clearly they would want to add a second player, like us, or they would have expanded [Kindle lending] into Canada."

At ALA, Mercer acknowledged librarians' desire to serve patrons who prefer the Kindle platform, but suggested that sending public library patrons to Amazon—and the blurring of the line between library users and paying consumers that represents—has proven to be too fraught to justify. "[OverDrive] is providing information that is being used to directly undermine the industry," Mercer told *PW*. "They are paying for the privilege of giving data to the competitor who is going to use that data to try to destroy their business. I don't get it."

Librarians, meanwhile, reacted coolly to the idea that they pressure OverDrive to cut ties with Amazon.

"Short answer, no, I wouldn't want OverDrive to give up their Amazon connection—even though I think Tom Mercer's views have enough merit that I might wish OverDrive would," said St. Mary's County (MD) Library director Michael Blackwell, an organizer of the ReadersFirst Coalition. "Amazon users know this way of getting content, so they continue to use it even though there are more private and I would argue better options on their devices. Tom is probably right about Amazon, but I'm not sure most libraries are going to follow his advice and lose users."

Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator for the Whatcom County Library System (WA), who recently organized a response to Blackstone Audio after the publisher signed an Audible exclusive deal that denies libraries access to new release Blackstone audiobooks, also expressed reluctance. "My consortium's Kindle usage hovers around 23% to 24%," she told *PW*. "Kindle users are part of the reason we pay a premium to OverDrive. Why would we want them to disable that scenario?"

PW library columnist Sari Feldman, former executive director of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, and an ALA senior fellow for e-books and digital content, also urged caution. "While [Mercer's] statement may or may not be accurate, library users often prefer accessing content through the Kindle app," she told *PW*. "Before jumping to conclusions, it would be important for public libraries to better understand the value that app brings to users, and what perceived data analysis is enabled by Amazon."

In addition to asking librarians to pressure vendors in the digital library space, Mercer offered librarians two more recommendations in his message: to engage directly with authors on the ways "digital lending contributes to the discovery and accessibility of their works." And, to consider "joining the efforts of the Association of American Publishers" in urging the Federal Trade Commission to look into Amazon's business practices.

"We unconditionally support the ability for libraries to acquire content on publication date, and we will persist in advocating on their behalf," Mercer concludes. "Our collaborative approach of open discussion with both publishers and libraries has helped create the market we have today, and I am confident we will be able to improve access again as the market evolves."

“

As long as data is shared with Amazon by library users, Amazon will spin that data to create concern, and publishers will be forced to alter their digital library lending models or risk losing key authors.

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Dear Customers,

I'd like to take this opportunity to address the many changes that are impacting your library's ability to offer a high-quality digital lending service to your users. As the leader of our cloudLibrary solution since its 2010 inception, I have worked closely with libraries and publishers on specific issues faced by the library industry. Given recent changes that have rightly upset you, it's important that we discuss what has led to today's digital content landscape, what bibliotheca is doing to support libraries, and where we go from here.

First, let's review how the digital library lending market looked in early 2012. Penguin had stopped selling digital content to libraries completely, Random House had raised its prices, and HarperCollins had changed its terms to allow only 26 checkouts per eBook. Macmillan, Hachette, and Simon & Schuster had no library lending models at all. In the beginning, we leveraged our position as 3M, a trusted company with a history of innovation, to have meaningful conversations with publishers, understand their concerns, and ultimately convince them of the benefits of partnering with libraries.

Through lengthy discussions, including a strategic partnership with NYPL, we were able to experiment, gather data, and pilot a new digital library lending model with a limited group of libraries. Owing to this hard work, we were the first library vendor to sell Penguin, Hachette, Macmillan, and Simon & Schuster eBooks. Once publishers were comfortable with the model we'd established, they opened up their terms of sale to all vendors in the market. This infusion of content into the library market resulted in the dramatic growth of digital lending that's been well documented.

Now, fast-forward to the digital library lending market today, where we're seeing a shift from several of the major publishing companies. Blackstone Audio is embargoing audiobook titles for 90 days, Hachette has changed from perpetual access to two-year expirations (also implemented by Penguin Random House last October), and Macmillan will limit the quantity of frontlist titles effective November 1. It's unlikely that all of these publishers would be changing their terms without external pressures. So, where is the pressure coming from? There is evidence to suggest that in recent years, authors and agents have come to feel that the library market is eroding their revenue. I think it's telling that Macmillan CEO John Sargent addressed his letter about the library model change to "Macmillan Authors, Macmillan Illustrators and Agents."

This begs the next question: if authors and agents are voicing concerns about library lending, where are they getting their data from? I doubt it's publishers, since a report on library lending is not part of an author's royalty statement. There is only one company that has access to readers' digital retail purchases as well as users' digital library borrowing habits, and that is Amazon.

In 2009, Amazon created a publishing division, Amazon Publishing, which doesn't sell any of its eBooks or audiobooks to libraries. They have teams of people talking with authors and agents trying to secure rights and make them as exclusive as possible to the Amazon ecosystem. It's highly probable that they use the data provided by library users to argue that library lending is undercutting retail sales. This is a major concern that we need to understand and to face together as an industry.

As long as data is shared with Amazon by library users, Amazon will spin that data to create concern, and publishers will be forced to alter their digital library lending models or risk losing key authors.

Where do we go from here? I think libraries can respond in a few ways. First, they can pressure their existing vendors to terminate relationships or refuse to share data with Amazon. If Amazon won't sell their content to libraries, then why should libraries share their data with Amazon? Second, they can appeal to ALA to engage authors the same way they engage publishers and demonstrate how digital lending contributes to the discovery and accessibility of their works. The book ecosystem starts with authors and we need to ensure that they understand the value libraries provide. It is also advisable to consider joining the efforts of the Association of American Publishers, who are currently pressuring the Federal Trade Commission to monitor Amazon.

In closing, I want to assure you that we at bibliotheca are continually working to ensure libraries have equitable access to content. We unconditionally support the ability for libraries to acquire content on publication date, and we will persist in advocating on their behalf. Our collaborative approach of open discussion with both publishers and libraries has helped create the market we have today, and I am confident we will be able to improve access again as the market evolves.

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Tom Mercer

SVP of Digital Products, bibliotheca

t.mercer@bibliotheca.com

Quick links to our library solutions

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This Month at RAILS – September 2019

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing



Sterling High School (in Sterling CUSD #5) and Walnut Public Library District are the two most recent libraries to begin using [Find More Illinois](#) for interlibrary loans. Three more libraries, including the first SWAN member, are still in implementation.

The value of Find More Illinois as a discovery tool continues to grow. It now returns results from four of the six LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs) within RAILS: PrairieCat, Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA NFP), Rock River Library Consortium, and SWAN. Searches are also automatically done against one I-Share library (the University of Illinois at Chicago) and five libraries with standalone integrated library systems. Anyone can search Find More Illinois; patrons and staff at participating libraries can also use its interlibrary loan functionality.

Cataloging Training Pilot

RAILS is offering a pilot edition of the newly developed “Cataloging Basics” course on [September 25 and October 2](#), and the “Classification and Subject Analysis Basics” training course on [October 9 and October 16](#). Both courses will provide a strong foundation for newer catalogers and a great refresher for more experienced catalogers, or anyone who wants a better understanding of bibliographic data, classification, or subject analysis. The courses will not focus on any particular ILS or the local practices of any specific library or consortia.

Each course is two full days and will be presented in-person by Nincy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator. Currently, both of the courses are full and there are more than 10 people on the waitlist.

ILA Conference Program on Linked Data

Nincy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, will be among the presenters at a program on [“Implementing Linked Data in Libraries”](#) at the Illinois Library Association (ILA) conference on Thursday, October 24, 9 – 10 a.m. Linked Data can help libraries make their catalog records discoverable by search engines. RAILS Board members going to ILA are welcome to attend this program to find out more.

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

Opportunity for School Libraries to Learn More about BiblioBoard at AISLE

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, will present the program, “Free E-Books and More, Available All the Time!” at the AISLE (Association of School Library Educators) conference on Saturday, October 12, from 3 - 4 p.m. Attendees are asked to bring their own device and will learn more about the thousands of pre-K-12 titles and resources available 24/7/365 to everyone in Illinois through RAILS’ partnership with BiblioBoard.

Other BiblioBoard News

RAILS has had a very positive response to the BiblioBoard page we created especially for schools (railsforschools.biblioboard.com). The page provides streamlined access to educational content and also restricts access to other content found on the main BiblioBoard site. Anna Behm will talk more about this page in her presentation at the AISLE conference (see above).

Inkie.org is a suite of resources, available to everyone in Illinois at no charge, that support local authors and allow readers to access locally-produced content. RAILS debuted inkie.org to the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project committee for their feedback. They had several positive comments. Inkie.org will officially launch on October 1. Here’s a sneak peek at the logo:



RAILS Reception at ILA: Sponsored by Baker & Taylor and BiblioBoard

RAILS Board members are invited to join us for our second annual RAILS ILA reception on Tuesday, October 22, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., in the Pebble Beach Room, at the Tinley Park Convention Center. Appetizers and beverages (including beer and wine) will be available courtesy of our sponsors, Baker & Taylor (B&T) and BiblioBoard.

There will be a very brief program at 6 p.m., where you will hear the latest news about RAILS e-resources and have a chance to hear from our sponsors. All Illinois library staff are welcome to attend. Please [register on L2](#) so we will know how many people to expect.

eRead Illinois Update

RAILS is now able to offer B&T Unbound service to our [eRead Illinois](#) Axis 360 members at no additional fee. Going Unbound allows them to purchase additional content that is available only to their patrons. Previously, there was an annual platform fee (in addition to the eRead Illinois membership fee) associated with this service.

RAILS staff had a very productive meeting with B&T representatives on September 12, at Burr Ridge. We discussed the development progress of the new Axis 360 app, recent shifts in e-book

publisher/library relations, and RAILS' holds strategy. We will have another check-in meeting with B&T at the ILA conference next month.

Responding to Publisher Restrictions on Library E-Books

RAILS invited several e-content consortia and sharing group managers to a meeting on September 30 to discuss recent publisher restrictions on library e-books. We plan to discuss best practices, training, public outreach, and the possibility of collective action.

Explore More Illinois Update

As of August 31, over 200 libraries participate in [Explore More Illinois](#), our cultural pass program



that allows Illinois public library cardholders to get offers from museums, park districts, historical societies, performing and visual arts centers, and other attractions 24/7 from any computer, tablet, or smartphone. Over 180 reservations were made to Explore More attractions in August. New venues include Blocks to Bricks in Schaumburg, Love's Sweet Arrow Bookstore in Tinley Park, Aikman Wildlife Adventures in Arcola, and City Lit Theater in Chicago.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

LASA Study Update

On August 29, RAILS staff met with staff from the Laboratory of Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA), Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. We reviewed LASA's previous work for RAILS and discussed next steps in LASA's statewide delivery study that is now beginning. That study will aid in making decisions about the best locations for delivery hubs, including the transfer hub where materials are exchanged between RAILS and the Illinois Heartland Library System. We also talked about other ways that geospatial analysis and mapping could benefit RAILS' work, such as furthering understanding of the unserved issue.

Other Delivery News

RAILS is also beginning a delivery study with consultant Greg Pronevitz to help make future delivery decisions. Mr. Pronevitz has extensive experience with library delivery services; he is the former executive director of Massachusetts Library System and former co-chair of the physical delivery special interest group in ALA's Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies. His study will have three phases:

- Phase 1 will assess the pros and cons of in-house vs. outsourced delivery in the Chicago metropolitan area. We have outsourced a significant part of this work since January 2014 and want some comparative data and five-year projections to aid in future decisions. Estimated completion date: end of December 2019.
- Phase 2 will evaluate operations in all four RAILS delivery hubs (Bolingbrook, Coal Valley, East Peoria, and Rockford) and measure them against responses to an RFI (Request for Information) for outsourced delivery services to these areas. Many of the areas served

by these hubs are much more rural than our currently outsourced areas, so there are different delivery issues to consider. Estimated completion date: end of June 2020.

- Phase 3 will look at possibilities for automating sorting and labeling. Currently, all sorting and most labeling are manual procedures. Implementing automation would require capital investment, but could pay off long-term by improving efficiency, sorting accuracy, and cost-effectiveness. Estimated completion date: end of August 2020.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

OpenGov Discount Announced

RAILS is partnering with OpenGov to offer RAILS public libraries special discounted pricing. Their Citizen Engagement suite of resources helps libraries communicate the services and value they provide to their communities and to share their story in a data driven context.

Fox River Valley Public Library District was the first library in the nation to adopt this resource in early 2019. Check out their [Transparency Dashboard](#) and their [“Long Overdue” Survey](#), created with OpenGov tools. RAILS members can learn more at an [OpenGov webinar](#) on October 9 at 11 a.m., and by visiting the [Deals & Discounts](#) page on the RAILS website.

Free Community Engagement Calendar

[Burbio.com](#) is a free and fully automated community events platform that streams all of a town's activities - library, school, government, and non-profit events - in one place and allows residents to personalize event feeds, add them to their digital calendar, and receive updates. RAILS members can find out more on our [Deals & Discounts](#) page.

Revised Deals and Discounts Page on RAILS Website

RAILS is revising the [Deals & Discounts](#) page on our website to create a more user-friendly, streamlined experience for members. We created a section to highlight specific resources, and all offerings are now arranged alphabetically, “accordion” style, for faster browsing. Stay tuned for further improvements to the page.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



AISLE and ILA Campaign-Related Activities

RAILS' [My Library Is... campaign](#) will be heavily featured at the October AISLE and ILA conferences. RAILS will have an exhibit booth at both conferences, with many activities to help libraries tell their stories, including a chance to spin our famous prize wheel. RAILS members

who participate in booth activities will be able to enter their names into a drawing for a Go Pro Hero 7 video camera to help them in their storytelling efforts.

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, will serve as moderator for a panel discussion, “Telling Our Story: Articulating Library Value across Type,” at both conferences. Presenters from academic, public, school, and special libraries will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing them in articulating the value of their library to different stakeholders. There will be a different panel at each conference. Laura Turner, former RAILS Board member, will be a member of the AISLE panel.

The dates/times for these presentations are:

- AISLE - Saturday, October 12, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- ILA - Tuesday, October 22, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

You’ll find more information about [RAILS activities at the AISLE and ILA conferences](#) in other sections of this report.

October CE Related to MyLibraryIs... Campaign

Upcoming CE opportunities related to our MyLibraryIs... campaign include:

- “Introduction to Google Data Studio” webinar, presented by RAILS Data Analyst Grant Halter, [Tuesday, October 1](#), 1:30 – 2:15 p.m.
- “Facts Tell, Stories Sell: Marketing Your Library’s Message” webinar, [Wednesday, October 9](#), 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

RAILS and IACRL to Host MyLibraryIs... Online Roundtable via Zoom

On Tuesday, November 5, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., RAILS and IACRL (Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries) will host an online roundtable on how academic libraries can better articulate their value. All academic library staff (and RAILS Board members) are welcome. [See more information.](#)

Applications Now Open for RAILS MyLibraryIs... Grant

RAILS has changed the name and focus of our Partnership Grant program to provide opportunities for libraries to engage in projects that help tell the library story and that increase visibility and support for all types of libraries. Libraries, working alone or with partner organizations, can apply for up to \$5,000.

We are especially interested in innovative programs that can be replicated by other libraries. Potential grant project areas may include (but are not limited to) paid advertising, partnering with other libraries/community organizations for promotion, video production, or working with a marketing consultant. The deadline is Friday, November 21. [Learn more.](#)

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

September RAILS CE Highlight

On September 18, RAILS held a workshop on notary services at the Indian Trails Public Library District for 20 member library staff. (Registration was limited to 20 people to provide personalized attention to all attendees.) Participants learned how to properly execute the responsibilities of an Illinois notary public.

Since 2016, RAILS has offered notary training at 10 different locations and a total of 180 members attended. Notary service continues to be one of our most requested training topics.

Trustee Training Opportunity

There will be a repeat of Nancy Sylvester’s “Trustee Workshop: Keys to Running a More Successful Board Meeting,” on [Saturday, October 19](#), from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., at Bloomington Public Library. This workshop is open to new trustees as well as current trustees and library directors who would like a review of board essentials and parliamentary procedure.

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service

System Membership Standards Program at ILA Conference

Deirdre Brennan and Brian Shepard, Executive Director, Indian Trails Public Library District, will present a program at the ILA conference on “[System Membership Standards as a Pathway to Excellence](#)” on Tuesday, October 22, from 4 – 5 p.m. Discussion topics will include the results of RAILS’ data collection efforts re the standards this past spring, next steps, and how the standards align with the work of the Illinois State Library and ILA.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

Census 2020 Grant Application

On September 10, RAILS submitted its census grant application to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to serve as a Regional Intermediary for the Collar Counties region, including DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. This grant is

focused on increasing the self-response rate of historically Hard-To-Count (HTC) communities.



If RAILS receives the grant, we will work with a number of public library and county agency subrecipients. Our application asks for total grant

funding of \$1,305,406, with about 80% of that allocated for subrecipient awards. The other 20% will be used to fund a nine-month Census 2020 Program Manager position, translation services, educational events, and marketing/outreach materials.

IDHS expects to select grant recipients by October 4. If RAILS is selected, grant activities will start almost immediately. The grant period runs from October 15 through June 30, 2020.

Helping the Unserved/Underserved

Good Response Rate to RAILS Unserved Survey

In August, RAILS conducted a survey of our public libraries to make sure that we had accurate information on the scope of the unserved challenge in our area and the services libraries offer to those who live in unserved areas. We asked for one response per RAILS public library. We received 240 responses to the survey. Since there are 412 RAILS public libraries, this represents a response rate of approximately 58%, which is very good in survey circles.

We are currently analyzing the survey results and will share that analysis with members, the board, and the Universal Service Committee.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

RAILS Member Update Details

All RAILS Board members are invited to attend our next member update on Thursday, October 3, from 10 a.m.–noon. You can participate at a scheduled videoconference location or via Zoom web conferencing. [Register here](#).

You'll hear the latest news on RAILS census activities, our [My Library Is...](#) campaign, the [grant project](#) to recreate L2, ways to engage with RAILS at the October AISLE and ILA conferences, efforts to help the unserved in Illinois, and inkie.org. There will also be reports from members, including East Moline Public Library's [capital campaign](#) and how it ties into the MyLibraryIs... campaign; and two RAILS partnership grant recipients, the [Bike the Trail Library to Library project](#) and Marist High School's [partnership](#) with Blue Island Public Library to create Escape Room learning games for kids/teens.

Conference Exhibits

As mentioned above, RAILS will have exhibit booths at the upcoming AISLE and ILA conferences. If you are attending either/both conferences, please stop by and say hello!

Exhibit hours are:

AISLE

- Friday, October 11, 7:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. AND 2 – 7 p.m.
- Saturday, October 12, 8:00 – 11:45 a.m.

RAILS is a Silver Level Sponsor for AISLE, and we are sponsoring the Thursday afternoon break and Friday hors d'oeuvres at our booth during cocktail time.

ILA

- Wednesday, October 23, noon - 5 p.m.
- Thursday, October 24, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

RAILS is a Platinum Sponsor of the ILA conference, and we are sponsoring the opening exhibits luncheon on October 23.

August/September RAILS Member Visits

In late August and early September, RAILS visited eight libraries in the Chicago, Northbrook, and LaSalle regions, including one academic library, two special libraries, two school libraries, and three public libraries. Highlights included hearing about the American Hospital Association's weeding project, learning about Seneca Public Library's book discussion group, and touring Highland Park High School Library's makerspace.

RAILS Staff News

Book Industry Study Group

On September 16, Anna Behm and Jane Plass attended *Book Publishing: From Concept to Consumer*, a program presented in Chicago by the Book Industry Study Group (BISG). Sessions encompassed the entire life cycle of a book, from conception, development, and manufacturing to retailing and libraries. RAILS is a member of BISG.