

10 January 2020

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – December - January, 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

Census grant update: A lot of time was spent in December and January on the census grant project. Amy had many conversations with liaisons at the Illinois Department of Human Services (the funder) to finalize the budget. She also spent a great deal of time communicating with sub-recipients about their budgets and work plans. On January 3 and 6, she chaired two meetings of representatives from the sub-recipients to give them an overview of reporting requirements, requesting funding, etc. It feels like the project is actually getting underway.

Funding requests: Greg McCormick reported that the State Library budget request will be submitted in early February. He is optimistic about the inclusion of additional funding, so we are too!

Delivery studies and changes: On December 19, Mark, Grant and I traveled to Springfield to meet with state library staff, Heartland staff and LASA (Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis). LASA has completed the final (so far) phase analysis of our delivery routes and how to maximize efficiency and decrease costs. Staff is examining their recommendations and will have a full report at the February board meeting.

Greg Pronevitz has almost completed his study of delivery outsourcing. We will also have a full report about this study at the February board meeting.

Greg will be continuing to work with us the next two phases of his reports: looking at automation and at possible outsourcing in other parts of RAILS.

There is additional information about RAILS delivery service in the *This Month at RAILS* report.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Elders of the Internet: Our next video will launch in time for the ILA legislative meetups. We plan an extensive publicity campaign centered around Library Lovers Month (February) and Library Lovers Day (February 14). Nick Offerman, famous for his role as Ron Swanson in *Parks and Rec*, is the star of the *Elders*. We are grateful to Nick and to his sister, Lauren Offerman, director at Three Rivers Public Library District, for their assistance and support of this project. I will provide more details at the meeting.

AISLE: Mary, Joe and I met virtually with the Executive Secretary, President and incoming Executive Secretary of AISLE on December 5. As you know, we are trying to forge a closer relationship with the organization so we can be better informed about school libraries and better able to assist them. We had a good conversation about how RAILS can be helpful to AISLE in the areas of training, chapter development and advocacy. We are going to investigate how we might collaborate with AISLE to offer PDH (professional development hours) credits.

Legislative meetups: The ILA legislative meetups are scheduled to take place throughout February and March. [Here](#) is a link to the schedule; Emily Fister can register you, and RAILS is also happy to reimburse you for attendance if your library cannot do so.

These meetups are a great opportunity to talk to legislators about the importance of libraries and RAILS, to hear about ILA's legislative priorities and to establish relationships trustees and other library advocates in attendance.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Certification: The annual certification process for all system members began on January 2, 2020 and ends on March 31, 2020. We anticipate that it will go very smoothly this year thanks to improved access to online reports (thanks to the Illinois State Library) and work that Grant Halter has done to make existing data about libraries more accessible for our administration/certification team. The process will be even more streamlined next year because libraries will use L2 to complete the process.

Podcast: I recorded my latest podcast in December. My guests were Leila Heath and Anna Behm; we discussed e-books and the recent issues with publisher embargoes.

Prepare libraries for the future

Universal service: The universal service committee met at the end of November. We had an excellent discussion about the survey we did of how libraries serve the unserved, some projects that are being tested in libraries and some new ideas for expanding service. We are working with ISL and Heartland on a new FAQ to reduce confusion among member libraries about the actual law and rules for unserved residents and non-resident cards. We will also work with the state library to determine what changes can be made to non-resident laws and rules that will help libraries and residents. Some specific ideas:

- Kids cards – for unserved residents under the age of 18
- Summer reading cards
- Temporary cards for teachers or students
- Expanding reciprocal borrowing to include school libraries so a school ID or library card could be used at a public library
- A tax bill formula based on the entire RAILS region would bring greater equity and affordability of cards
- Little Free Libraries in Joliet could be replicated to encourage reading and library use.

We agreed to look at many of the ways libraries are applying the laws and determine if there is a downside to offering these types of cards.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Policy committee update: The policy committee completed their review of the employee handbook and have forwarded it to the RAILS board for review. It is on our January agenda.

New hires: I am very excited to announce that Monica Harris, currently Executive Director of the Schaumburg Township District Library, joined RAILS as Associative Executive Director on January 6. You will meet her at the board meeting.

Minimum wage: On January 1, 2020, the minimum wage in Illinois increased to \$9.25 per hour. RAILS is not affected by this increase.

This Month at RAILS – January 2020

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing

RAILS held its 4th annual Consortia Staff In-Service Day in November at Joliet Junior College. Staff from different consortia across Illinois rarely have an opportunity to get together for networking and to exchange news, ideas, and best practices. Grant Halter, RAILS Data Coordinator & Research Analyst also gave a presentation about data. Fifty consortia staff members participated in the event.

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

2019 E-Resources Highlights

The BiblioBoard page RAILS created especially for school libraries (railsforschools.biblioboard.com) was definitely a 2019 highlight! The page has been accessed over 1,000 times since we launched it in September. In addition, three of the five most viewed titles on BiblioBoard last year came from a collection featured on the RAILS for Schools page (Time for Kids).



RAILS also debuted inkie.org in 2019, and the response so far has been great! Since launching in October, over 100 people have signed up for Pressbooks accounts via inkie.org to create over 70 e-books. Several of those e-books were submitted for inclusion in the Indie Illinois and Indie Author Project Select collections in the BiblioBoard Library.

RAILS staff have started developing new procedures for the new order/renewal process which will be implemented for [eRead Illinois](#) this spring. This will save substantial time for the 400+ libraries that participate in eRead Illinois, as well as RAILS staff.

You'll find more information about RAILS' accomplishments related to e-resources and other programs/services in the RAILS Strategic Plan Progress Report in the January board packet.

Explore More Illinois

As of December 1, 237 libraries and 28 attractions participate in RAILS' cultural pass program, [Explore More Illinois](#). Two performing arts attractions, Lake Forest Symphony and Harris Theater in Chicago, have allowed us to offer live music experiences to Explore More Illinois users. Other new attractions include the Lincoln Heritage Museum in Lincoln and the Hegeler Carus Mansion in La Salle.



We continue to add libraries to Explore More Illinois. We reached out to PrairieCat, SWAN, and RSA members who had not yet joined, which resulted in approximately 25 libraries joining the program. We will continue to reach out to other consortia members and standalone libraries in 2020. In addition, [WiLS](#), a nonprofit library membership organization in Wisconsin, has expressed interest in participating in Explore More Illinois, and RAILS is currently talking with them about this possibility.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

Delivery Experience Survey

In December, RAILS invited our libraries to complete a delivery experience survey to gauge their overall satisfaction with their delivery service, whether that service is provided through RAILS or Continental Transport Logistics (CTL). CTL provides overnight delivery to 134 libraries in the Burr Ridge and Wheeling areas.

RAILS asked for one response per library. We received responses from 294 libraries (out of a possible 519 libraries that receive daily delivery service), for a response rate of 57%. Responses reflect an overall satisfaction with the service provided both by RAILS and CTL. The survey included 27 questions in different categories, including access and security, communications, delivery of materials, and overall experience with delivery. Results as a whole were very positive.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

Deals and Discounts Update

As a benefit of membership, all RAILS libraries have access to TeamSoftware Solutions' Public Web Browser (PWB) free of charge for in-library use only. PWB allows a library to lock down the web browser on computers and customize workstations for specific uses (e.g., a dedicated catalog computer). RAILS renewed the subscription for PWB through December 28, 2020.

In November's report, we mentioned the special discounted rate from Swank Movie Licensing USA for the annual public performance license. New library sign-ups for Swank fell short of our goal of 150 for RAILS and IHLS combined. There will be an opportunity for another group purchase in the spring.

RAILS staff have started to explore the benefits of the OpenGov Citizen Engagement suite of resources for internal use. This resource includes a tool for creating surveys and reports and incorporating data and statistics. Discounted pricing is available for all RAILS public libraries.

More information on RAILS deals and discounts is available by logging into the RAILS website and visiting the [Deals & Discounts](#) page.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



My Library Is... Champion Training

To encourage more participation in our [My Library Is... campaign](#) to help libraries tell their stories and prove their value to different stakeholders, RAILS held a “champions training session” on January 7 via Zoom. Approximately 16 people participated and learned what kind of content can be shared on the campaign website, how to post to the site, and how to promote the campaign to others. Attendees were very enthusiastic and use of the campaign website spiked to its highest level in weeks shortly after the session.

My Library Is... Facebook Challenge



Seven days, seven challenges! The first full week in January, RAILS invited all libraries to share talking points, marketing plans, social media posts, and other efforts to tell their stories to different library stakeholders. The challenge was still taking place at the time of this writing, and we will report on results next month.

Upcoming RAILS Online Roundtable: Managing the Marketing Process

On Tuesday, January 21, at 10 a.m., RAILS will host an [online roundtable on managing the marketing process](#) in libraries. This event will also include a short presentation by Hollis Sienkiewicz, Director of Marketing, Schaumburg Township District Library. All library staff are invited to participate and share how they facilitate a marketing process that works for everyone.

My Library Is... Grants Awarded to Four Projects

RAILS is changing the focus of our partnership grants this fiscal year to provide opportunities for libraries to develop projects that help tell the library story and increase visibility and support for all types of libraries.

[My Library Is... grants](#) were recently awarded to the following projects:

- “Fresh Start Marketing” - Eureka Public Library District, Chenoa Public Library District, and Pontiac Public Library
- “The Best of Fox River Grove Memorial Library in 30 Seconds” - Fox River Grove Memorial Library District

- “1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Promotion” - Rockford Public Library, Cherry Valley Public Library District, and North Suburban Library District
- “My Library is a Partner in Growing Young Readers” - Skokie Public Library and Skokie-Morton Grove School District 69

There will be a second round of My Library Is... grants in the spring, with an application deadline of April 23, 2020.

ILA Reporter Article on My Library Is... Campaign

RAILS' Dan Bostrom and Mary Witt wrote an article for the December issue of the *ILA Reporter*, titled ["Complete This Sentence: My Library Is..."](#) The article explains how the idea for the My Library Is... campaign came to life, provides general tips all libraries can use to tell their stories more effectively, and includes examples from a variety of different types of libraries on what they have done to effectively promote their library's value.

My Library Is... Continuing Education

RAILS offered two programs in January related to our My Library Is... campaign:

- "Video for Libraries - Why Video is a Tool You Need for Telling Your Library's Stories" webinar, January 15
- "Marketing and Community Partnerships" webinar, January 16

We will offer two additional programs in February:

- ["How to Create Social Media Video on a Shoestring Budget"](#) webinar, February 11
- ["Library Use of Social Media: Navigating the Legal Landscape,"](#) February 13

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

Upcoming RAILS CE

- ["Top Employment Law Issues"](#) webinar, February 6

Developing Library Leaders

Elevate 2020

RAILS will again play a prominent role in planning the Elevate Library Leadership Program. This event will take place in late April, and the planning committee has chosen Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as the focus for the 2020 program. The event will be held at the Illinois State

Library in Springfield, and applications will be open to library staff across all types throughout the state. Final details and the application to attend Elevate 2020 will be available in late January.

Library Director Essentials Series

Kate Hall and Kathy Parker, authors of *The Public Library Directors Toolkit*, will conduct a four-part Director Essentials series in 2020. Each program will explore a different topic of relevance for library directors. The first program will cover Finances, including how to put together an operating budget and use it in day-to-day operations. This event will be held on [Monday, February 10](#), 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., at the RAILS Burr Ridge service center and other videoconference locations.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

Member Visits

Between late November 2019 and early January 2020, RAILS performed 12 site visits in the Northbrook, Sycamore, and Chicago regions. Libraries visited include:

Academic library:

- Midwest College of Oriental Medicine

Public library:

- Maple Park Public Library District

School libraries:

- Big Hollow School District 38
- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School
- Des Plaines Community Consolidated School District 62
- Emmons Grade School District 33
- Evanston Township High School District 202
- Harrison School District 36
- Libertyville School District 70
- Saint Ignatius College Prep
- Zion-Benton Township High School District 126

Special library:

- AbbVie

RAILS Member Update

The RAILS Member Update on January 16 covered a variety of topics, including:

- RAILS' efforts to help the unserved in Illinois and Joliet Public Library's efforts to establish Little Free Libraries in unserved areas
- Our proposal to offer statewide database access to all system members
- An update on RAILS' census activities and Waukegan Public Library's census activities through a RAILS partnership grant
- An update on our My Library Is... campaign, including details about a new video all libraries can use to show why libraries are still needed in the internet age
- An update on our grant project to recreate L2 (librarylearning.info)
- Information on new RAILS discounts and group purchase offers
- An update on our Explore More Illinois cultural pass program

At the time of this writing, 100 members were registered to attend the update session; 72 of these were registered to attend via Zoom.

RAILS to Exhibit at IDEAcOn in Schaumburg

RAILS will exhibit at the [IDEAcOn conference](#) (formerly the ICE Conference) in Schaumburg, February 24 – 27. IDEAcOn is a teaching and learning conference designed for all educators, including educational leaders, technology specialists, IT professionals, librarians, instructional coaches and pre-service teachers from pre-K through higher education.

This is the first time RAILS is exhibiting at this conference and we hope that it will be a good opportunity to engage with many of our school library staff.

RAILS Social Media Engagement Efforts Grow in 2019ocial Media Success Stories

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) indicate that RAILS had another good year with social media in 2019. We nearly doubled our engagement numbers from 2018 for Facebook and Twitter. Below is a breakdown of a few of the KPIs.

RAILS Facebook growth, 2018 vs 2019

- Daily new likes: +81%
- Daily page engaged users: +93%
- Weekly total reach: +101%

RAILS Twitter growth, 2018 vs 2019

- Link clicks: +113%
- Retweets: +123%
- Likes: +78%

Evaluating the Impact of RAILS Programs/Services

Evaluation of RAILS Continuing Education

RAILS CE/Consulting staff has begun working with RAILS Data Coordinator & Research Analyst Grant Halter to revise our post-CE event evaluations, as well as to conduct a broader CE survey of our membership. Our aim is to capture more meaningful data that will help inform us on how RAILS CE is impacting our members and in what ways we could improve our CE services.

RAILS Staff News

The RAILS Staff In-Service Day for 2020 is tentatively scheduled for September 10 at the Burr Ridge service center. The planning committee will begin meeting in January to develop the schedule for the day. One anticipated change for 2020 will be a longer period of dedicated time for delivery staff to meet and attend training of specific relevance to their positions. This has frequently been requested on post-event evaluations in the past.

Leila Heath, RAILS Library Resources and Programs Manager attended an ELSUM (Electronic Subscription Managers Network Group) meeting at Arlington Heights Memorial Library and gave an overview of RAILS news.

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, was appointed Director of Communication for the Leadership and Management Division of the Special Libraries Association beginning in January 2020.

Dan Bostrom has also been appointed to the Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASGCLA) Online Learning Committee. ASGCLA is a division of the American Library Association.