

Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) RAILS Strategic Plan Progress Report January 2020

Introduction

This report highlights specific RAILS' 2019 activities to accomplish the goals and objectives in the [RAILS Strategic Plan](#). (It does not include all of the day-to-day activities RAILS staff engage in to keep the system running smoothly and efficiently.) The report covers the 2019 calendar year (January through December).

In addition to listing RAILS activities/accomplishments for 2019, the report also gives the results and/or impact of those activities (if known), including how each particular activity benefitted RAILS members. The report also includes links to background information on the RAILS website for those wishing to learn more about a particular program or service.

We are very interested in board feedback on this report and how we might revise it in the future to be even more helpful in documenting RAILS' progress in meeting the goals/objectives in our strategic plan.

2019 Accomplishments Related to RAILS Strategic Plan Goals/Objectives

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	Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
<p>Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond</p>	<p>In April, RAILS Executive Team members traveled to Springfield to meet with Greg McCormick, Illinois State Library (ISL) staff, and Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) staff to discuss issues of mutual interest, including statewide database access, delivery, and a coordinated continuing education plan.</p> <p>RAILS worked with our Resource Sharing Committee throughout 2019 to investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase resource sharing, including investigating best practices in Illinois and other states.</p> <p>RAILS provided ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and Illinois Digital Heritage Hub throughout 2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAILS Executive Director serving on DPLA’s SimplyE Advisory Committee • RAILS Executive Director serving as alternate member of DPLA Network Council • RAILS Executive Director serving on the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub Board and helping to plan the April 2019 DPLAfest conference in Chicago • RAILS Executive Director participating in the planning of a program for DPLAfest, “The Indie Tidal Wave,” in collaboration with Soon to be 	<p>Discussing topics of mutual interest leads to better communication and coordination in providing system services statewide. As an example, the April meeting led to the submission of a proposal for free statewide database access for all Illinois libraries (see below).</p> <p>Finding ways to foster cost-effective resource sharing among Illinois libraries helps RAILS and our members to provide better service to Illinois residents and optimize the use of tax dollars.</p> <p>Because digitization is becoming such a critical issue for all types of libraries, it is important for RAILS to take a leadership role in this area.</p> <p>Serving on the SimplyE committee provides access to discussions of new features for this app, so RAILS can ensure member interests are represented as development work continues. Working on adoption of SimplyE is an Executive Director goal for FY 2020. (See more information below.)</p> <p>The Network Council is responsible for broad-range planning for DPLA initiatives. Since these plans will affect all libraries, it is important for RAILS to have a seat at the table.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famous colleagues, Biblioboard, and Minitex, a peer organization of RAILS in Minnesota • Publicizing the call for proposals for DPLAfest and encouraging attendance at the conference via articles in the <i>RAILS E-News</i> and other means • Five RAILS staff members attending DPLAfest <p>RAILS staff had our annual meeting with colleagues at WiLS (formerly Wisconsin Library Services) in October. RAILS staff also served on the planning committee for the 2019 WiLSWorld conference in July in Madison. The conference was open to Illinois libraries.</p> <p>RAILS served as a sponsor of the spring meeting of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) in Vancouver, Canada. A RAILS staff member served on the program planning committee and also attended the meeting.</p>	<p>The location of DPLAfest provided a great opportunity for all near Chicago to participate in this conference. Attendees learned a great deal about digitization and new projects other libraries are working on, which gave them ideas to bring back to their own libraries.</p> <p>Collaborating with our Wisconsin colleagues allows us to exchange ideas, and share common areas of interest and best practices. WiLS has expressed interest in collaborating further with RAILS on Explore More Illinois (see below).</p> <p>ICOLC includes approximately 200 library consortia from around the world and supports participating consortia by facilitating discussions on issues of common interest and providing information on international best practices in resource sharing.</p>
Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing	<p>RAILS worked with our Consortia Committee throughout 2019 to discuss common issues, including: strategic plans, finding an alternative method for consortia to batchload records to OCLC (see below), the SimplyE app (see below) and more.</p> <p>Find More Illinois (FMI) began as a pilot project in April 2018 with 21 libraries. RAILS continued to grow participation in 2019 by conducting in-person presentations and webinars and widely promoting participation to all types of libraries via a variety of different communication channels and member encounters.</p>	<p>Discussing common issues and sharing best practices can improve and increase consortial services and prevent individual consortia from having to recreate the same wheel. Promoting/sharing consortial developments also leads to more libraries joining consortia.</p> <p>At the end of 2019, FMI participants included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 academic library • 33 public libraries • 4 school libraries • 3 libraries in implementation process

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	<p>RAILS launched a Facebook scavenger hunt game to build awareness and enthusiasm for FMI. We posted a new challenge on our Facebook page each week for eight weeks.</p> <p>The SHAREit software that powers FMI was upgraded to version 6. RAILS was the first site to upgrade to the new version, and we worked with our vendor, Auto-Graphics, to provide feedback and suggested tweaks.</p> <p>In response to discussion at a RAILS Board meeting, RAILS staff developed a plan for lender-only participation in FMI, where lender-only participants would not pay an annual fee.</p> <p>RAILS worked with Auto-Graphics to revise the FMI pricing schedule. This led to a revised annual membership fee structure, which took effect on July 1, 2019.</p> <p>Under RAILS' new annual LLSAP support grant program, we provided a mix of financial support and in-kind services to our six LLSAPs in 2019 (CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA-NFP, and SWAN).</p> <p>RAILS offered Catalog Membership grants to help fund startup costs for potential LLSAP/consortia members.</p>	<p>Over 50 people participated. During the hunt period, nearly twice as many people engaged with our Facebook page compared to the same time period in 2018.</p> <p>Benefits of the new software include greater security, the ability to open multiple sessions in different tabs of the same browser, improved display of search results, and the addition of Goodreads reviews.</p> <p>We anticipate that this plan will encourage participation by libraries with large collections that would significantly enhance resource sharing.</p> <p>FMI is more affordable. Annual fees for libraries with collection expenditures of \$200,000 or more were reduced. (Fees for other libraries were already so low that it was not feasible to reduce them further.)</p> <p>Approximately 549 RAILS libraries (individual buildings) participate in one of these LLSAPs. Consortia use RAILS support in various ways to supplement their operations, add and improve services to their member libraries, and partially offset membership fees.</p> <p>The new support model provides greater clarity on what an LLSAP is, which leads to greater equity in providing financial support to all RAILS LLSAPs.</p> <p>Joining a consortium makes the cost of resource sharing more affordable for libraries and also increases the</p>

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	<p>The application deadline was April 17 and grants were awarded to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rock Falls Elementary School District - \$17,939 to join Rock River Library Consortium • Indian Trails Public Library - \$51,465 to join CCS • Milledgeville Public Library - \$8,409 to join Rock River Library Consortium • Astoria Public Library - \$6,458.95 to join RSA <p>The eight libraries formerly in the Northern Illinois Cooperative (NIC) became part of PrairieCat in 2019. RAILS supported the merger through our catalog membership grant program with a total award of \$187,955.10.</p> <p>Some Illinois consortia currently batchload holdings information to OCLC via a service called OSMOSIS. As of July 1, 2020, OSMOSIS will no longer be available. RAILS staff led an Exposing Consortial Holdings Working Group to investigate alternatives.</p> <p>RAILS held its 4th annual in-service day for all consortial staff in November.</p> <p>RAILS developed a cataloging and classification training pilot program in 2019. The plan is to offer the training on an ongoing basis beginning in January 2020.</p> <p>A RAILS staff member planned and moderated a panel on “Implementing Linked Data in Libraries” at the 2019 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference.</p>	<p>number of resources available to library patrons through consortial catalogs.</p> <p>One of these grant awardees saw a 24.5% increase in overall circulation in their first month as a consortia member. This moved their circulation numbers into positive territory for the first time in quite a while.</p> <p>The resource sharing impact of adding these libraries to PrairieCat became apparent immediately in search results from the PrairieCat catalog and in changes in delivery volume at the RAILS Rockford facility.</p> <p>The group identified methods and strategic priorities for exposing consortial holdings on the web and facilitating resource sharing in the absence of the OSMOSIS service.</p> <p>Consortia staff rarely have an opportunity to get together to exchange news, ideas, and best practices.</p> <p>Cataloging is one of the training topics requested most often by RAILS members. The pilot programs filled rapidly with more than 10 people on the waitlists.</p> <p>Linked Data can help libraries make their catalog records discoverable by search engines, which furthers resource sharing.</p>

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<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>RAILS worked with member libraries to count all outgoing delivery items during quarterly fine count periods in 2019. We finished automating this process in 2019 and members can now report their statistics via L2.</p> <p>RAILS met with staff from ISL, IHLS, and the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis at Southern Illinois University (LASA) on several occasions in 2019 to discuss next steps in LASA's statewide delivery study to explore potential changes to the current Illinois delivery structure. LASA reps also attended a RAILS Board meeting to talk about their recommendations for delivery changes.</p> <p>RAILS investigated the possibility of automating internal daily delivery paperwork by capturing information electronically with tablets or other devices.</p> <p>RAILS began a delivery study in 2019 with consultant Greg Pronevitz that will assess the pros and cons of in-house vs. outsourced delivery, evaluate operations in all four RAILS delivery hubs (Bolingbrook, Coal Valley, East Peoria, and Rockford), and look at possibilities for automating sorting and labeling (currently manual procedures).</p> <p>As part of the above delivery study, RAILS distributed a delivery experience survey to member libraries in December to gauge their overall satisfaction with our delivery service.</p>	<p>Having accurate statistics on delivery volume helps RAILS plan route changes and ensure that member delivery needs are met. RAILS received a great deal of feedback from members asking to submit statistics online rather than via cumbersome paper forms.</p> <p>LASA's study will aid in making decisions about the best locations for delivery hubs, including the transfer hub where materials are exchanged between RAILS and IHLS. Geospatial analysis and mapping (part of LASA's expertise) could also benefit RAILS' work on the unserved issue.</p> <p>RAILS determined that this (and other RAILS work) would require an in-house software developer. This position was filled in late 2019.</p> <p>RAILS wants to make delivery as efficient and economical as possible, while continuing to provide stellar service to our members. This work will be completed in 2020 and we will present all findings to the RAILS Board.</p> <p>294 libraries (out of a possible 519) responded to the survey. Responses indicated an overall satisfaction with RAILS delivery service. Survey results are still being analyzed at the time of this writing.</p>

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<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 style="text-align: center;">eRead Illinois Axis 360</p> <p>In 2019, RAILS made several enhancements to eRead Illinois and engaged with members via a variety of activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding over 6,000 items to the collection, including over 4,000 e-books and nearly 2,000 audiobooks • Changing the item loan period from 21 to 14 days and the hold pick-up period from three to two days. (RAILS purchases an additional copy for every four holds on an item.) • Offering B&T’s Unbound service to eRead members at no additional fee • Making several improvements to our eRead renewal process to make it less cumbersome • Working with B&T throughout 2019 on improvements to the Axis 360 app and to improve the user experience in general • Relaunching a monthly eRead Illinois Axis 360 newsletter • Hosting a “What’s New with eRead Illinois Axis 360?” webinar • Beginning the process of analyzing the Axis 360 acquisition strategy and holds purchasing plan <p style="text-align: center;">BiblioBoard/inkie.org</p> <p>RAILS introduced inkie.org in 2019, a suite of resources available to everyone in Illinois at no cost through RAILS’ partnership with BiblioBoard. It includes</p>	<p>At the end of 2019, eRead Illinois Axis 360 members included 412 academic, public, school, and special libraries. Public and school libraries account for the majority of members.</p> <p>Circulation of the collection was up for the second year in a row. Items were checked out over 427,000 times, which is a 12% increase over 2018.</p> <p>As a result of changing the loan period, eRead users get holds faster, libraries can provide more popular content to users, and RAILS maximizes collection development funds while continuing to add new content.</p> <p>Going Unbound allows libraries to purchase additional content that is available only to their patrons.</p> <p>The app in place at the end of 2019 was a major improvement and we have received positive feedback from members.</p> <p>Response to the newsletter has been positive thus far.</p> <p>Staff from over 40 libraries attended the webinar.</p> <p>Analyzing our current strategy will help to create a sustainable purchasing model that meets user demand while remaining within the budget.</p> <p>Inkie.org provides a creative outlet for library patrons and helps libraries to make connections with local authors.</p>

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	<p>Pressbooks Public (to help patrons create an e-book), Indie Illinois, and marketing materials libraries can use to promote inkie.org.</p> <p>RAILS purchased \$50,000 worth of additional content (including Spanish language materials) especially for school libraries for our BiblioBoard platform.</p> <p>BiblioBoard created a unique instance of our collection just for schools that provides streamlined access to educational content and restricts access to all other content on our main BiblioBoard site. We heavily publicized this instance to teachers and school library staff in 2019.</p> <p>RAILS experimented with an eight-week paid BiblioBoard Facebook ad campaign in 2019 to spread the word about our BiblioBoard offerings. Eight ads were created, each one promoting a different title available via BiblioBoard.</p> <p>RAILS continued to partner with/support the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project (STBF) in 2019. STBF opened a new manuscript contest, and self-published authors were invited to submit a completed manuscript through their public library. The STBF contest also added another category for young adult authors in 2019.</p>	<p>Inkie.org was a huge hit at RAILS' Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) and Illinois Library Association (ILA) exhibit booths. Many conference-goers were seen roaming the exhibit hall sporting an octopus tattoo (the inkie.org mascot).</p> <p>The decision to add this content was based on feedback RAILS received at our 2018 AISLE booth. The response to these new additions has been very positive thus far. Three of the five most viewed titles on BiblioBoard in 2019 were part of this content.</p> <p>Schools have expressed concerns about the age-appropriateness of some content on our main BiblioBoard site. This instance streamlines the browsing experience for students. School library staff were very excited to hear about this at our 2019 AISLE exhibit booth.</p> <p>All eight posts were listed in the top ten posts in terms of reach during the campaign. Weekly total reach statistics showed a big increase in engagement with our Facebook page during the campaign as well.</p> <p>Self-publishing grew at a rate of 40% in 2018 and shows no signs of slowing down. STBF helps to demonstrate the important role of libraries in self-publishing. It also helps connect authors with their local library.</p>

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	<p style="text-align: center;">Publisher Restrictions on Library E-Books</p> <p>2019 saw a serious threat to equitable access to e-content in libraries from unfair pricing restrictions and distribution practices from publishers. RAILS took a number of steps to help libraries deal with this issue, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAILS’ Executive Director helping to draft the “Resolution on E-Book Pricing for Libraries,” which calls for the American Library Association (ALA) to create a joint working group to address library concerns with publishers and content providers • RAILS adding an “E-books Issues” web page to the “Library Pulse” section of our website to inform members about relevant issues, to detail RAILS actions on these issues, and to provide suggestions for members on how they might take action • Inviting several e-content consortia and sharing group managers to a meeting to discuss recent publisher restrictions on library e-books. RAILS also created an Electronic Content email list at the request of the group. <p>RAILS staff also shared information about all of our e-resources via a variety of venues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting on current/emerging library e-content issues at Reaching Forward South • Presenting “E-Books and More! E-Content Services from RAILS “ at the Kane County Institute Day for school library staff 	<p>This is a huge issue for RAILS members, and all libraries, and it is important for RAILS to help libraries respond.</p> <p>Library actions, including the resolution, have visibility and have led to further action, including ALA’s “E-Books for All” national campaign, the potential for Congressional hearings, and the Hachette publishing company reaching out to discuss the issue.</p> <p>With all of the scattered information available on this issue, it is helpful for libraries to have all important information together in one place.</p> <p>14 people attended and there was a productive discussion. The group decided to meet regularly in the future.</p> <p>Libraries are looking for economical e-resources to meet the growing needs of their customers. Library staff are often unaware of the resources RAILS has to offer and we want to take every opportunity to increase their awareness.</p> <p>Presentations offer an opportunity to speak to a number of RAILS members in one setting, engage in</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing information about BiblioBoard’s Spanish language resources for kids at a SPARK (Spanish Programming and Resources for Kids) networking meeting • Presenting “The eRead Illinois Project: Building and Maintaining a Regional Popular Materials E-book Collection” at the Electronic Resources Minnesota conference • Presenting a program on using BiblioBoard in schools at the AISLE conference • Presenting “Introducing inkie.org” to a group of authors at Sugar Grove Public Library’s Indie Author Day event <p>A RAILS staff member was part of a statewide advisory group created by CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) to shape an e-resources brokering service for library system members that do not belong to CARLI. The group first met in July 2019.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore More Illinois</p> <p>RAILS’ new online cultural pass program launched on April 1 with 87 library participants and 14 attractions. At the end of 2019, Explore More included 246 library participants and 28 attractions, with much potential for expansion. IHLS has expressed interest in joining, as well as WiLS, a Wisconsin nonprofit membership organization similar to RAILS</p>	<p>conversation, and get feedback about member concerns and ideas for future action.</p> <p>CARLI gave notification in October 2019 that they elected not to move forward with this collaboration.</p> <p>RAILS members have shown great interest in RAILS offering a museum pass program. They are looking for more options than those provided by the existing museum pass program in Illinois prior to Explore More’s debut. There is also great interest in an online program that does not require library users to physically visit the library to obtain the passes.</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>RAILS initiated the following new discount and group purchase offers in 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burbio (September) – free, automated community events calendar platform • HF Group – consolidated bindery pickup service run through RAILS delivery • OpenGov (October) – suite of resources to help libraries communicate their services/value in a data driven context • Public Web Browser (December renewal) – allows libraries to lockdown web browsers and customize workstations for specific uses • RBdigital (October) – over 32,000 fiction, nonfiction and juvenile titles available for simultaneous use; online how-to training on hundreds of software applications/devices; and over 500 lifelong learning courses • Swank Movie Licensing USA (November) – discounted rate for annual public performance license <p>RAILS worked with IHLS on multiple deals throughout 2019.</p> <p>RAILS also heavily publicized the Illinois State Library’s Try-It! Illinois database trial for library staff and users to evaluate electronic resources for possible purchase</p> <p>RAILS staff shared information about RAILS deals and discounts via a variety of venues, including:</p>	<p>Number of library participants with cost savings (where available):</p> <p>Burbio – 14 libraries launched/in process.</p> <p>OpenGov: First year of contract: \$36,646 purchase/ \$36,646 savings (libraries got half-off discount); Total length of contract: \$158,070 purchase/ \$158,070 savings</p> <p>Public Web Browser: RAILS subsidized purchase for all libraries: \$5,875.</p> <p>RBdigital Unlimited – 9 libraries: \$28,920 purchase; \$231,080 savings over original pricing</p> <p>Swank: 19 new licenses: \$6,423 purchase/\$2,753 savings; 131 potential new licenses: \$43,910 purchase/\$18,904 savings; 262 renewing licenses: \$113,967 est. purchase/\$48,000 est. savings; Total \$164,300 purchase/\$69,657 savings</p> <p>Collaboration increases economies of scale, broadens library exposure to deals, and strengthens system partnerships.</p> <p>Electronic resources are very expensive, and it is helpful for library staff and users to give them a “trial run” before committing to purchase.</p>
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Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting the Swank deal at the AVID (Audiovisual Information & Discussion) networking meeting • Discussion at the ELSUM (Electronic Subscription Managers) networking meetings 	<p>These meetings provide a wealth of information about library concerns, experiences, and needs regarding electronic resources.</p>
<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</p>	<p>RAILS offered partnership grants for member libraries of all types to collaborate with other libraries, businesses, nonprofits, and/or government agencies.</p> <p>Four projects were selected to receive grants in June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McHenry Public Library, McHenry County Historical Society, Woodstock Public Library – to digitize McHenry County newspapers and make them available free to the general public • Skokie Public Library, Village of Skokie, Skokie Park District, Skokie School District 73 – to create a more welcoming and equitable community by expanding the SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Initiative • Waukegan Public Library, City of Waukegan, Waukegan Park District – to create a grassroots awareness campaign to position the library as a safe resource for participation in the 2020 Census • Westchester Public Library, Forest Preserves of Cook County, Save the Prairie Society – to guide youth in combining photography with naturalist-led hikes to discover the science, biology, and beauty of native lands 	<p>Grant awardees were publicized in the weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i>, via the RAILS website, and other means. Awardees also discussed their projects at a RAILS Member Update session to share best practices and to give other libraries ideas for collaborative projects.</p> <p>These grants encourage member libraries to work with external partners on innovative programs and services. Our previous collaborative grants required applicants to collaborate with other libraries. Some libraries told us there were no other libraries in their area to collaborate with, so we expanded the grants to include other partners.</p>

<p>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</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General Networking Events</p> <p>RAILS Member Meetups are in-person, multitype opportunities for members to connect on common issues and to learn more about RAILS offerings at the same time.</p> <p>RAILS initiated online roundtables in 2019: hour-long discussions on specific topics hosted by RAILS networking groups and held via Zoom. 2019 roundtables included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Programming & Collections for Those with Dementia/ Alzheimer’s” • “20’s and 30’s Programming” • “Census 2020 Services & Resources” • “Census 2020 Programming” • “Social Media Marketing” <p>[See more info on roundtables under Goal Two below]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academic Libraries</p> <p>RAILS and the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL) planned two networking events for academic library staff in 2019. One focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The other focused on helping academic libraries tell their story (to coincide with RAILS’ My Library Is... campaign – see below).</p> <p>RAILS and IACRL also hosted an “after-hours” Illinois academic library meetup at the 2019 Association of College & Research Libraries conference in Cleveland.</p>	<p>All types of RAILS libraries have asked us to schedule more networking opportunities, both in-person and online.</p> <p>RAILS held five meetups in 2019.</p> <p>Online events provide networking opportunities for those library staff who find it hard to leave their buildings, including staff from small and nonpublic libraries.</p> <p>These are all issues that libraries are currently facing. The roundtables provide a chance for library staff to better understand these issues and also to share best practices and problem-solving assistance.</p> <p>During our strategic planning process, academic library staff told us they wanted more networking opportunities to discuss common issues. They also told us they wanted help telling the academic library story.</p> <p>25 people attended this event</p>
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Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
	<p>RAILS staff attended the first-ever Chicago Research Summit at North Park University in Chicago. RAILS sponsored this event through a Continuing Education Event Grant. It was geared towards universities and archives in the Chicago region</p> <p>RAILS helped launch a For-Profit/Small Academic Library networking group, including holding a kickoff meeting in January.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School Libraries</p> <p>RAILS hosted a school library networking event at Granite City Brewery in East Peoria. Attendees also discussed the potential formation of a Peoria-area AISLE chapter.</p> <p>RAILS hosted an after-hours networking event at the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) conference in Louisville, Kentucky in November. Staff from all Illinois libraries were invited.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Special Libraries</p> <p>RAILS partnered with the Special Libraries Association (SLA) - Illinois chapter and SLA Iowa to host a networking event at the Deere & Company library in Moline.</p>	<p>About 80 people participated and 15 people visited the RAILS table. This gave us an opportunity to interact with academic library staff we do not often see at more general events.</p> <p>This group filled an unmet need, as no identifiable networking group existed in Illinois to serve the needs of for profit and small academic libraries.</p> <p>Eight people attended this event. Attendees submitted an application to AISLE to become a chapter.</p> <p>Approximately 40 school library staff members attended, which is a very good number for this type of event!</p> <p>30 people participated, including librarians from Illinois and Iowa.</p>

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

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<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>My Library Is... Campaign – General Activities</p> <p>RAILS launched the My Library Is... campaign to help libraries of all types and sizes to tell their stories and promote their value. As a first step, we conducted a survey to determine member needs and how we could meet those needs through the campaign.</p> <p>On July 15, RAILS launched a campaign website, including general resources and toolkits; specific info for each library type; opportunities for libraries to share stories, talking points, marketing plans, videos, social media posts, and more; a blog; and a training section.</p> <p>RAILS changed the name and focus of our partnership grant program to provide opportunities for members to engage in projects to increase visibility/support for all types of libraries. RAILS awarded My Library Is grants to four projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fresh Start Marketing” - Eureka Public Library District, Chenoa Public Library District, 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, North Suburban Library District • “My Library is a Partner in Growing Young Readers” - Skokie Public Library, Skokie/Morton-Grove School District 69 	<p>RAILS created the campaign in direct response to many requests for this type of assistance from all library types during our 2018 strategic planning process. We received 380 responses to our survey and used this feedback to plan ongoing campaign activities.</p> <p>RAILS launched the site in response to survey feedback asking for a place where libraries could share best practices. Since the site launched, there have been approximately 3,650 visits to the site and over 10,700 pages viewed.</p> <p>RAILS received 18 applications for My Library Is... grants. We awarded a total of \$13,020 to four applicants. We will heavily publicize grant award winners to give other libraries examples of projects they may wish to imitate in some fashion.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>RAILS changed the focus of our CE Event Grant program in 2019 to fund events by individual libraries, networking groups, and consortia that help promote libraries and tell the library story.</p> <p>RAILS staff wrote an article for the December 2019 issue of the <i>ILA Reporter</i> on the campaign highlighting successful strategies libraires have used to tell their stories.</p> <p>As 2019 draws to a close, RAILS is working with a consultant to draft talking points for each type of library to use to communicate their value to different stakeholders.</p> <p>My Library Is... Videos</p> <p>The Imagination marketing firm created the “Where Dreams Take Flight” video for RAILS as a pro bono project. The video portrays children discovering the library and all it has to offer, and is available in several different lengths and two languages, English and Spanish. RAILS shared the video with Illinois libraries to use on their websites, social media, etc.</p> <p>RAILS worked with Imagination on a second video focusing on why libraries are still needed in the internet age. The video is scheduled to debut on Library Lovers Day (February 14, 2020).</p>	<p>RAILS awarded \$23,500 in CE Event Grants to 11 applicants in 2019.</p> <p>The article highlights library activities that others can emulate and provides general advice on things every library can do to tell their story more effectively. Many libraries requested this advice on the survey referenced above.</p> <p>RAILS sought feedback from different types of libraries to ensure that the talking points are on target. Many libraries asked for talking points on the survey referenced above.</p> <p>RAILS received many accolades about the video. We know libraries shared it on their websites and via social media, as well as at library programs. The video was also shown at several ILA Legislative Meetups. RAILS won the Association Media & Publishing 2019 EXCEL Award for the video. The award recognizes excellence/leadership in association media and communications.</p> <p>A #1 need identified by all types of libraries in the survey mentioned above was for help showing why libraries were still needed in the age of the internet</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p style="text-align: center;">My Library Is... Partnerships/Promotion</p> <p>RAILS staff met with ILA’s Executive Director to discuss ways we could partner and avoid duplication in helping libraries tell their stories. We also met with the ILA marketing committee to discuss possible collaborative efforts.</p> <p>RAILS staff met with AISLE representatives to discuss partnering to promote the campaign.</p> <p>RAILS heavily featured the campaign at our booths at the 2019 AISLE and ILA conferences. Our famous wheel featured an exercise to help participants practice telling their stories. RAILS members who engaged with us at both booths had their names entered into a drawing for a video camera to help them in their storytelling efforts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">My Library Is... CE/Networking Opportunities</p> <p>RAILS developed/moderated a panel discussion at the ILA and AISLE conferences, “Telling Our Story: Articulating Library Value across Type.” There was a different panel including representatives from the four library types at each conference.</p> <p>RAILS and IACRL hosted an online roundtable on how academic libraries can articulate their value more effectively.</p>	<p>ILA has a similar goal in their strategic plan: to “develop education and tools for library leaders and staff to establish clear understanding of libraries’ worth among the people served...”</p> <p>AISLE has agreed to help RAILS publicize the campaign to their members.</p> <p>RAILS staff had a number of good conversations about the campaign at both the AISLE and ILA conference booths. Approximately 169 school library staff visited our AISLE booth and a record number of 592 library staff visited us at ILA.</p> <p>Approximately 30 school library staff attended the AISLE panel presentation and over 50 attended the ILA presentation. We heard positive comments from attendees of both programs as anecdotal evidence of their success.</p> <p>As mentioned above, academic libraries asked for this type of assistance during our strategic planning process. 52 people registered; 30 attended “live”</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>RAILS hosted an online roundtable on social media marketing.</p> <p>RAILS held a multi-part CE series, “Getting the Most from your Library Data”, to help members think more strategically about the data they collect and to utilize it to the fullest extent possible.</p> <p>RAILS held a variety of other CE sessions, both in person at different locations in the RAILS area and online. All CE was planned in response to campaign survey feedback. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-week “Marketing for Librarians” course • “What Does a Library Marketing Plan Look Like and What Does it Do for You?” • “Lights, Camera, Action: the Nitty Gritty Details of How to Use Video for Library Marketing” • “Creating Compelling Copy aka Persuasive Writing for Marketing” • "Communicate to Educate" - workshop for school librarians • "PR + Media Relations 101: PR as Part of Library Marketing" webinar 	<p>Social media is another area libraries asked for assistance with via the survey mentioned above. 31 people registered; 15 attended “live.”</p> <p>Members told us via our campaign survey that they needed help using data to tell their stories. The series was wildly popular with a total attendance of 1,016 people at eight sessions. Libraries collect a wide variety of data and are often unsure how to use it. As a result of this program, they can hopefully use this data more effectively in telling the library story.</p> <p>Nearly 50 people attended the video and compelling copy sessions, and nearly 100 attended the PR + Media Relations 101 event.</p> <p>15 school library staff attended “Communicate to Educate,” a good number for a school CE session.</p>
<p>Help member libraries prove their value to administrative bodies, funders, elected officials, etc.</p>	<p>RAILS’ My Library Is... campaign helped meet this objective as well (see previous item)</p> <p>RAILS promoted the 2019 Illinois Library Association legislative meetups via the weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i> and other means. RAILS staff also attended these meetups.</p>	<p>The meetups help library staff talk to their legislative representatives in a relaxed setting and RAILS was eager to help promote them.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>We worked with the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee to provide talking points board members could use when talking about RAILS programs/services. The committee also focused on other key library issues, including supporting school libraries and the 2020 Census. An AISLE Board representative spoke about school library issues at one advocacy committee meeting.</p> <p>RAILS featured board development topics at each board meeting, including inviting the President of the American Association of School Librarians to speak about school library issues.</p>	<p>Providing talking points helps the board to become better advocates for RAILS programs/services.</p> <p>The committee chose to focus on school library advocacy and the census as two areas of concentration in 2019. Providing information on school library challenges and other topics helped them become better advocates on these issues.</p> <p>Knowing more about issues faced by school and other types of libraries helps RAILS Board members to become better advocates on these issues.</p>
<p>Advocate for and help members advocate for all libraries as they face funding and other challenges</p>	<p>RAILS led efforts to submit a proposal to establish statewide funding of online databases for all Illinois library system members. We asked all RAILS libraries to complete a survey to determine database needs, and shared this survey with IHLS. We have also had several conversations with ISL, ILA, and other stakeholders re this issue and this will continue in 2020.</p> <p>In addition to working with AISLE and the RAILS Board to show support for school libraries as described above, including helping school libraries to tell their stories, RAILS took other steps to help advocate for schools in 2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending an AISLE Board meeting to discuss RAILS' services for school libraries • Initiating regular Zoom meetings with AISLE Board members and RAILS staff to discuss how RAILS could better support AISLE and school libraries 	<p>Statewide database access would produce massive savings for system member libraries and eliminate unnecessary duplication of resources. It would also help equalize resources available to the 13 million Illinois residents, including unserved residents. Libraries may also be able to divert funds normally spent on databases to deal with increases in the Illinois minimum wage.</p> <p>During our 2018 strategic planning process, all types of libraries overwhelmingly expressed the need for RAILS to lead efforts to advocate for school libraries. The RAILS Board and the Board Advocacy Committee have also discussed the need to prioritize advocacy for school libraries.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>RAILS' Executive Director and other staff participated in ILA Public Policy Committee (PPC) and Advocacy Committee meetings throughout 2019 to discuss upcoming legislation of importance to libraries.</p> <p>RAILS provided "advocacy alerts" via the <i>RAILS E-News</i> and website to help members advocate on important issues, including the need to support the continued reauthorization of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to preserve federal funding for libraries and ALA's "E-Books for All" campaign.</p>	<p>It is important for RAILS to stay abreast of current legislative issues of importance to libraries and to work cooperatively with our partners on these issues. RAILS was also able to speak up on issues of importance to our members at these meetings. For example, we first proposed the statewide database idea referenced above at a PPC meeting.</p> <p>It is sometimes difficult for our members to keep up-to-date on every important issue affecting libraries, and even if they are aware of a particular issue, they are often uncertain about what their individual library can do to help. Efforts to advocate for the continued support of IMLS were successful, and we would like to think that RAILS efforts in spreading the word about this issue were of help.</p>

Goal Three: Help libraries be the best they can be

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
Continue to provide continuing education (CE) to ensure ongoing staff development for all levels of staff at all types of libraries	<p>In 2019, RAILS offered 58 CE events. Many of these events were recorded and added to the CE Archives on the RAILS website. That archives included over 150 individual recorded CE events at the end of 2019.</p> <p>General CE workshops that were particularly popular with members in 2019 included:</p>	Approximately 3,200 library staff members attended one of RAILS' CE events in 2019. Many of the events RAILS offers are based on member feedback. We also offer CE on issues and innovations that it is important for our members to know about.

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Reinventing Your Library Space” with marketing professional David Vinjamuri • “Libraries and the 2020 Census” with speakers including Representative Theresa Mah, Anita Banerji of Forefront, and Denise Raleigh from Gail Borden Public Library • A three-part series delivered by Ann Emery of Depict Data Studio (Report Redesign, Simple Spreadsheets, and Great Graphs) <p>RAILS expanded our CE/consulting department to include two CE Specialists (we formerly had one)</p> <p>RAILS offered members access to live and archived webinars through People-Connect Institute (PCI) webinars. Topics included library services, leadership and management, skills development, and technology.</p> <p>RAILS continued working with the following partners in 2019 to bring CE/consulting to libraries throughout the RAILS area and beyond:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Source – to provide CE and discounted membership for RAILS members • Ancel Glink – to offer a statewide FOIA/OMA hotline • United for Libraries – to provide statewide trustee training 	<p>Approximately 60 library staff attended the David Vinjamuri workshop</p> <p>Over 160 members attended this event in person or watched via RAILS Live (our streaming service at the time).</p> <p>Over 500 members registered to attend these webinars. They were part of the popular data series referenced under strategic plan goal two above.</p> <p>The expansion was part of a staff reorganization and allowed the CE/consulting team to take over some of the work handled by departing RAILS staff.</p> <p>18 RAILS members took advantage of our access to PCI archived webinars during 2019. They provide an option for staff unable to leave their libraries to attend CE.</p> <p>59 libraries took advantage of HR Source discounted membership. It is difficult for some libraries to hire an HR specialist on staff.</p> <p>The RAILS FOIA/OMA hotline was accessed 71 times during 2019. Many libraries can’t afford to consult an attorney re FOIA requests.</p> <p>Trustee training is one of the most-often requested RAILS CE topics.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>Ensure that all libraries are able to offer the best possible service to their community of users</p>	<p>RAILS continued working with ISL, ILA, our members, and other stakeholders on developing revised system membership standards, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting data from member libraries to determine which standards libraries currently met, which standards they might have difficulty meeting, and what general assistance RAILS could provide • Communicating regularly with ISL about how we might move forward to incorporate the new standards with ISL’s data collection processes, including the annual certification process • Presenting a program at the 2019 ILA conference to discuss the latest developments with the standards • Working with ILA to ensure that the standards worked with ILA’s new <i>Serving Our Public</i> standards for public libraries <p>RAILS successfully completed the 2019 annual certification process by regularly publicizing the need for all RAILS members to certify and by working with members individually to complete the process as needed.</p> <p>RAILS received special grant funding from ISL to replace L2, the statewide CE calendar and member directory. 2019 grant activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering input from members and other stakeholders about their current use of L2 and issues we may be able to resolve through the grant 	<p>774 libraries of all types completed our data collection form. RAILS revised the standards based on this feedback.</p> <p>Working with our partners helps us take a holistic approach to membership standards. For example, RAILS anticipates that the new standards will be incorporated into the FY 2021 certification process, which will streamline that process. They will also help us work with ISL on potential changes to the library per capita application process and with ILA on their public library standards. All of these cooperative efforts will make things easier for libraries and help them to provide better service.</p> <p>At the end of the certification period, all but two RAILS libraries had either successfully completed the process or had requested withdrawal.</p> <p>The total restructure and refresh of L2 will result in a more modern, robust, and flexible platform that better meets the ongoing needs of all stakeholders. The current platform can no longer support the evolving needs of ISL, library systems, and system members.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>project. This included facilitating a series of town hall meetings statewide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuing an RFP and choosing the Aten Design Group to work with us on the project • Promoting the need for system members to update their current L2 information and keeping them informed about the grant project <p>RAILS visited libraries that indicated an interest in RAILS membership throughout 2019 to discuss how RAILS membership could help them provide better service to library customers.</p> <p>RAILS responded to a number of issues raised by our member libraries during 2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with our attorneys to provide guidance on how public libraries could respond to the increasing numbers of people taking photographs and filming in libraries without interfering with First Amendment rights • Responding to FOIA/OMA questions and advising our libraries to use the RAILS FOIA/OMA hotline <p>Other issues RAILS helped members with that are covered in other sections of this document include e-book pricing issues, the new Illinois minimum wage, the 2020 census, and providing help for members in telling their stories more effectively.</p>	<p>RAILS welcomed six new members in 2019, including five school libraries and one special library.</p> <p>One of RAILS’ requirements as a library system is to provide consulting assistance to our member libraries. Providing assistance on issues that many libraries are facing prevents each library from having to deal with these issues on an individual basis.</p>
<p>Ensure the ongoing education of library leaders and the</p>	<p>RAILS staff helped plan/support/implement the second annual Elevate leadership program in partnership with ISL, IHLS, and ILA. The all-day, intensive program, held</p>	<p>Many members have expressed the need for leadership training and Elevate helps to fit this bill. 89 library staff members statewide participated; 64 from RAILS libraries.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>development of leadership skills for library staff</p>	<p>at the Illinois State Library, focused on building effective teams.</p> <p>RAILS staff helped plan/support/implement the third annual Directors University in partnership with ISL, IHLS, and ILA. The week-long university provides training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors.</p> <p>RAILS staff consulted with member library boards and attended board meetings on an ongoing basis to assist with training, and various other policy and bylaws issues</p> <p>In addition to the online training for Illinois library trustees referenced above, RAILS also offered in-person training opportunities for trustees on Saturdays at these locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Forest Public Library (August) • Bloomington Public Library (October) • Schaumburg Township District Library (November) 	<p>Those new to the library director role are hungry for knowledge and direction. 51 new directors attended; 30 were from RAILS libraries. Event evaluations were very positive. For example, 95% of respondents strongly agreed that applying what they learned would help improve library service.</p> <p>In addition to a variety of general consultations, RAILS helped individual libraries deal with financial problems, hiring new library directors, trustee training issues, and achieving compliance with system membership standards.</p> <p>84 trustees attended these sessions. Holding the sessions on Saturdays allowed more trustees to attend. Several trustees remarked that this was the best trustee training they had ever attended.</p>

Goal Four: Prepare libraries for the future

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>Help libraries anticipate, understand, and respond to changing</p>	<p>RAILS offered a variety of CE events in 2019 to help members respond to changing social issues and customer needs, including workshops on these issues:</p>	<p>Follow-up evaluations from the implicit bias webinar indicated a strong interest in additional training opportunities. Among other possible RAILS-led training,</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>social issues and customer needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opiate users in the library • Implicit bias and stereotype threat • Cannabis in the workplace • Developing diverse children’s and YA collections <p>RAILS added a new section, The Library Pulse, to our homepage to help libraries of all types and sizes stay current on issues/challenges affecting them. These Pulse pages were available at the end of 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 Census • New Minimum Wage in Illinois • E-Content Publisher and Pricing Issues <p style="text-align: center;">Other Census 2020 Efforts</p> <p>RAILS submitted a lengthy and complicated grant application to the Illinois Department of Human Services to help encourage full participation in Census 2020. We will work with libraries and county offices in DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties to increase the response rate in historically hard-to-count communities.</p> <p>RAILS hired a Program Manager to lead our “Census 2020: It Counts!” grant activities.</p> <p>Other RAILS efforts to help “get out the count” included:</p>	<p>Elevate 2020 will focus on topics including implicit bias and stereotyping.</p> <p>Following the “Cannabis in the Workplace” webinar, members expressed confusion regarding how reasonable suspicion would be handled in their library. As a result of this feedback, we will offer a follow-up webinar in the spring on this topic.</p> <p>As a result of a RAILS staff member attending a content marketing conference in 2019, RAILS wants to feature more content on our website to help our members with current issues they are facing. The Library Pulse pages include links to key resources, let members know what RAILS is doing to help with the issue, and provide suggestions for actions libraries can take and examples of library best practices.</p> <p>RAILS received a \$750,000 grant.</p> <p>Illinois’ 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.</p> <p>Since this is the first year that a majority of census forms will be completed online, libraries can be major players in this effort as many provide free internet access and a safe place for people to complete the form. RAILS is in a key position to help libraries increase their visibility by fulfilling this important role.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a RAILS email list in response to member feedback for libraries to discuss Census 2020 issues • Hosting two online roundtables on the census and inviting all Illinois library staff to attend to discuss common issues and concerns • Offering a “Census 2020: Learn what is at Stake!” webinar to provide information on how libraries could play a key role in census efforts • Hosting a “Libraries and the 2020 Census” workshop to discuss library involvement in the census • Inviting the Complete Count Commission Program Administrator and ISL’s representative with the Commission to discuss how libraries could get involved with the census at a quarterly RAILS Member Update session • Attending a meeting about the 2020 Census in Springfield, connecting with other organizations/agencies that will be part of a statewide push to get a complete count <p style="text-align: center;">New Illinois Minimum Wage</p> <p>In addition to creating the Library Pulse page on the minimum wage referenced above, RAILS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Featured a discussion of the minimum wage increase at a RAILS member update and invited ILA’s Executive Director to participate 	<p>The census email list has been very active thus far and there are over 361 subscribers.</p> <p>110 members registered for the two online roundtables; 76 attended live</p> <p>68 members attended the Census 2020 webinar, which was archived for later viewing.</p> <p>165 people registered to attend the “Libraries and the 2020 Census” workshop in person or online. The workshop was archived for later viewing.</p> <p>Attending the Springfield meeting helped us form collaborative relationships with new entities that will help with future Census 2020 and other projects.</p> <p>The increase in the minimum wage may place a burden on already-stretched library budgets. It is important for RAILS to help our members to see this as an opportunity. The Library Pulse page referenced helps with this effort.</p> <p>A record 155 members registered for the update session featuring a discussion of the minimum wage.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with ILA to ensure that libraries had the most current information on the increase and potential strategies for dealing with it • Hosted an HR Source webinar on complying with the new minimum wage <p style="text-align: center;">Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI)</p> <p>RAILS helped members respond to EDI issues by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an EDI mailing list for members to share plans and policies • Partnering with IACRL to host a networking event for academic library staff to discuss EDI issues as referenced above • RAILS staff attending the Public Library Association’s EDI symposium in Chicago and bringing ideas from that conference back to RAILS <p style="text-align: center;">Sparks Podcast</p> <p>RAILS recorded podcast interviews on the following topics in 2019 to keep members and others aware of library trends and to “spark” conversation on important issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual harassment in libraries and how to create a safe environment for staff • Content marketing and how it is relevant to libraries • ALA’s Carnegie Medal, discovering new authors, and reading “the best” books 	<p>Partnering with ILA avoids each of our organization’s recreating the same wheel</p> <p>88 members attended the HR Source webinar, and the recording was made available following the webinar along with related resources.</p> <p>EDI is a growing issue in the library profession and it is important for RAILS to play a leadership role in helping our libraries with this issue.</p> <p>Members requested that RAILS establish a mailing list to discuss EDI issues. Approximately 200 library staff have signed up for the mailing list thus far.</p> <p>RAILS has anecdotal evidence that our podcasts are popular with members. In general, podcasts are rising in popularity and it is important for RAILS to communicate with our members about important issues using different media to reach different audiences.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panorama Project that gathers data on the effects of library author programs on the purchase/borrowing of the author’s books • Being named Illinois Librarian of the Year, promoting the value of libraries, and library remodels • Trends with e-books and e-book publishing, and RAILS’ inkie.org suite of resources 	
<p>Partner with libraries and other stakeholders to foster an educated, engaged, and civil society</p>	<p>Efforts to fulfill this goal are covered in other sections of this document, including efforts to expand access to library resources and services, efforts to reach out to the unserved, continuing education activities, and efforts related to EDI and the 2020 Census.</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>RAILS conducted a survey of our public libraries to ensure that we had accurate information on the scope of the unserved issue in our area and the services our libraries offer to the unserved. We asked for one response per RAILS public library (there are 412 RAILS public libraries).</p> <p>Other 2019 activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Universal Service Committee to discuss additional ways to help the unserved • Asking the RAILS’ attorney to provide information on how we might amend the Library District Act and bringing this information to ILA’s Public Policy Committee 	<p>RAILS received 240 survey responses for an approximate response rate of 58%, which is very good in survey circles. We also uncovered a variety of helpful information and ideas that will aid us as we pursue efforts to help the unserved.</p> <p>Committee meetings have provided much fodder for additional activities RAILS can pursue to help the unserved. For example, the possibility of implementing a card for unserved children.</p> <p>Amending the Library District Act would enable non-district libraries to merge.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to make changes to the unserved information on the RAILS website • Contacting real estate professionals re how to utilize the Multiple Listing Service to provide home buyers with info on which houses are part of a library taxing district • Discussing unserved issues at a quarterly RAILS member update session • Asking community college libraries to complete a survey about services to their district residents and those without public library service • Having a conference call with ISL and IHLS to discuss the potential of unserved residents using libraries to complete the 2020 Census 	<p>Our efforts to change the RAILS website will make it easier for members to find information on extending services to the unserved. We are also planning a Library Pulse page on the unserved.</p> <p>There was a rousing discussion of the unserved issue at the member update and RAILS uncovered many member questions and areas of confusion that we can respond to with information and training</p>

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

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>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</p>	<p>RAILS exhibited at the following conferences in 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Youth Services Institute • Reaching Forward • SWAN Expo • Health Science Librarians of Illinois Conference • PrairieCat Users Group Conference • AISLE Conference • Illinois Library Association Conference • IHLS Annual Member Day 	<p>Conference exhibit booths present an ideal opportunity to speak to a number of RAILS members in one setting. Since all levels of staff often attend conferences, we also get a chance to meet/engage with staff we have never met before and who do not know how RAILS can help them. We set a RAILS record for conference exhibit booth visitors at the 2019 ILA conference, with 592 visitors!</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>In addition to our very popular exhibit booth at ILA, RAILS hosted a reception sponsored by Baker & Taylor and BiblioBoard.</p> <p>RAILS planned/held four quarterly RAILS Member Update sessions in 2019 to share the latest RAILS news and discuss issues of importance to our members. We also invited member attendees to share news from their libraries. We used Zoom for the first time at the October update session.</p> <p>RAILS revised our programs/services booklet and distributed it to members at RAILS conference exhibit booths, on library visits, and via other means.</p> <p>RAILS held 18 New Director Welcome discussions in 2019. These one-on-one online discussions offer the opportunity for new directors to discuss RAILS services and any other library needs.</p> <p>RAILS visited a number of libraries in our area in 2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 academic libraries • 25 public libraries • 20 school libraries • 7 special libraries <p>RAILS continued to grow our social media efforts in 2019</p>	<p>RAILS engaged with approximately 150 reception attendees. RAILS has become known for our receptions in two short years.</p> <p>Over 100 members register for each member update session; at least half register to attend via Zoom. A record number of 155 members registered for the April update session as referenced above.</p> <p>Many members have told us that they do not want to take a lot of paper when visiting us at our exhibit booths. Our booklet contains brief information about all our programs/services.</p> <p>New directors do not always want to take the time to schedule an in-person visit from RAILS staff. These online discussions have proven to be much more time-efficient for them.</p> <p>Visiting members allows us to spend more focused one-on-one time with them, to see the environments they operate in, and to meet with many of the staff members at the library where possible.</p> <p>RAILS saw a steady increase in social media engagement in 2019, with a 101% rise in Facebook weekly total reach and a 78% rise in Twitter likes.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>RAILS staff discussed relevant RAILS programs/services at all networking events and member meetups (see Goal One).</p> <p>RAILS introduced Zoom to replace GoToMeeting and RAILS Live as RAILS’ web conferencing tool of choice in July 2019.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academic Library Activities</p> <p>A RAILS staff member attended the 2019 Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) annual conference in Cleveland, Ohio.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School Library Activities</p> <p>RAILS held 11 RAILS School Library Tune-ups in 2019 via Zoom to discuss issues such as continuing education, interlibrary loan, e-books, etc. with our school library members.</p> <p>A RAILS staff member presented “10 Ways RAILS Can Enhance Your School Library” at the Kane County Institute Day for school library staff</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Special Library Activities</p> <p>A RAILS staff member attended the 2019 Special Libraries Association (SLA) annual conference in Cleveland, Ohio</p>	<p>Zoom has a number of advantages, including cost efficiencies. It also integrates with Outlook for scheduling and the Polycom videoconferencing system.</p> <p>Attending this event helped RAILS to keep abreast of the issues/trends facing our academic libraries.</p> <p>School libraries are often unaware of the different programs/services RAILS offers for them. The tune-ups offer a time-efficient way to target discussions to each individual school library.</p> <p>Over 100 school librarians participated in the Institute Day.</p> <p>Attending this event helped RAILS to keep abreast of the issues/trends facing our special libraries.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<p>A RAILS staff member attended the Special Libraries Association-Illinois Chapter's symposium in August to share what's new at RAILS.</p>	<p>Special library staff are often unaware of the services RAILS provides for them and they do not attend as many RAILS events (CE, networking meetings, etc.) as staff from other library types. Going where they are to present information about RAILS is often a more effective strategy.</p>
<p>Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and are helping to create the best possible future for all of our libraries</p>	<p>RAILS hired a Data Coordinator and Research Analyst in April (a new position), to oversee data collection, analysis, and related research</p> <p>RAILS conducted a number of regular evaluation activities in 2019 to gather member feedback, including”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveying attendees of all RAILS CE programs • Sending a pre-visit survey to libraries before conducting a member visit to determine what topics to emphasize on the visit • Surveying attendees of RAILS member meetups <p>Specialized surveys conducted in 2019 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking interlibrary loan staff to complete a brief survey on L2's Resource Sharing Policy Directory • Surveying members to determine the focus of the My Library Is ... campaign (see above) • Surveying members in conjunction with RAILS' proposal on statewide database access (see above) • Surveying members in conjunction with our revised system membership standards (see above) 	<p>These activities will help RAILS make more informed decisions about our programs/services and their impact on our members. Our Data Coordinator has also started to develop a data culture at RAILS and has started making improvements to data collection efforts connected with different RAILS programs/services.</p> <p>RAILS uses all of this feedback to plan future CE events, member visits, and member meetups.</p> <p>This feedback will help ensure that the “new L2” (see above) meets all users’ needs.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<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>RAILS continued implementing board engagement recommendations developed through a 2018 research project, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing/rolling out a board portal with all of the information board members need to be effective in one place • Continuing to enhance the board recruitment process, including making a stronger effort to recruit for more diversity on the board • Continuing to enhance board orientation sessions based on board member feedback • Continuing to educate board members about RAILS programs/services via Service of the Month presentations at each board meeting • Continuing to educate the board about issues of importance to all types of libraries via board development presentations at each board meeting <p>RAILS scheduled several board meetings at different locations in the RAILS area and invited members in the area to attend. Some meetings were preceded by a networking lunch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March – Aurora Public Library • April – RAILS East Peoria service center • June – Caterpillar Inc., Morton, IL – included networking lunch • September - RAILS Coal Valley service center – included networking lunch • October – New Lenox – preceded by lunch for retiring RAILS employee 	<p>All of the activities listed were initiated in response to board member feedback.</p> <p>The RAILS Board asked us to schedule board meetings in different locations in the RAILS area.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
<p>Ensure that all aspects of the RAILS organization use and model best practices in all that we do</p>	<p>A RAILS staff team reviewed our entire Employee Handbook, and received considerable input from HR Source and our attorney. By the end of 2019, we had reviewed the revision with the Board Policy Committee and we will present the handbook to the entire board in January 2020.</p>	<p>RAILS made a very significant revision to the handbook, adding policy changes and additions from the past few years and reorganizing it to make it easier to use. Some of the new policies, including the Family Leave Policy, model best practices for our members.</p>
<p>Deliver on the promise of organizational excellence by being agile, innovative, future-oriented, and member-focused</p>	<p>RAILS continued to work on enhancing our onboarding process in 2019. Six new staff at RAILS' Burr Ridge service center and three new staff from East Peoria met in Burr Ridge in May for a general orientation about RAILS history, services and projects.</p> <p>In July, RAILS held our annual staff in-service day at Illinois Central Community College in East Peoria. The day included several breakout sessions for staff to learn more about different RAILS projects and services.</p>	<p>This is the first time we have held a meeting like this to acquaint new staff with big picture information about RAILS. It was very helpful for them to spend time with each other and ask questions and all hear the answers.</p> <p>Staff have told us that what they enjoy most about our in-service days is learning about various RAILS projects so that they can be knowledgeable when speaking with members.</p>
<p>Engage in innovative projects on a statewide, national and international level and help RAILS members model these projects for their community of users</p>	<p>RAILS continued our partnership with the Massachusetts Library System, New York Public Library, and Minitex on the IMLS SimplyE for Consortia grant project. SimplyE is an open source e-reader app that makes it possible for patrons to access all of a library's different e-book collections in one place.</p> <p>Activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Featuring a presentation at the April RAILS Member Update on how libraries can get involved with SimplyE • Continuing to work with the Pinnacle Library Cooperative on a beta-test of SimplyE for Consortia project 	<p>Creating a single search for a library's e-content improves and streamlines access for library users. There is growing interest in this platform among RAILS' members, and many of our libraries have contacted us to find out how they can get involved. SHARE, IHLS' consortium, has also expressed interest in this product.</p> <p>Adoption of SimplyE in libraries is progressing very slowly because of the refusal of some publishers and vendors to deliver content through this platform.</p>

Strategic Plan Objective	Activities/Accomplishments	Results/Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with stakeholders at the ALA conference about SimplyE 	
<p>Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources to ensure maximum benefit to member libraries, library users, and Illinois taxpayers</p>	<p>RAILS provided ongoing, excellent stewardship of our financial resources as reported at monthly board meetings.</p> <p>The RAILS Director of Finance and Human Resources continued his role as Treasurer for LIRA and LIMRiCC, the two insurance cooperatives of which RAILS is a member.</p>	<p>Providing ongoing stewardship of our financial resources helps to make all of the other activities described in this report possible.</p>
<p>Maintain a research and development role to provide leadership and innovation to help members provide the best possible service to their customers</p>	<p>RAILS accomplished this goal by attending a number of different conferences and educational events in 2019, and bringing ideas back to implement at RAILS and/or to share with members.</p> <p>These conference include the “traditional” library conferences (ALA, ILA, AISLE, Association of College & Research Libraries, AASL, Special Libraries Association, and the Illinois Youth Services Institute.</p> <p>Staff also attended conferences our members may not be as likely to attend, including the American Society of Association Executives, Content Marketing World, DrupalCon, and the Code4Lib conference.</p>	<p>RAILS staff are on constant lookout for new ideas and developments that we can share with our members, that will help us provide better service to our members, and that will help members from all types of libraries provide better service to their customers.</p>