

14 February 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

Ebooks and related issues at ALA: RAILS staff (Leila Heath, Monica Harris and Anna Behm) attended ALA midwinter where they focused on ebook and related issues. They met with Baker and Taylor to continue discussions about improvements to the App. They also attended meetings of Readers First, the Ebook consortial interest group and the DPLA SimplyE advisory committee.

We have been discussing the App with Baker and Taylor for a year now. It is not a stable App and although a lot of work has been done to improve it, it still is not where we would like it to be. We are seriously considering looking at other vendors for eRead, including issuing an RFP to potential vendors. We have informed Baker and Taylor about this. Given that the app is the primary way that patrons access the eRead collection, we are concerned that eRead does not get the use it should because the App is a barrier, not an effective portal.

IMLS: I expect that you have already heard the news that for the 4th year in a row the proposed federal budget de-funds the Institute for Museum and Library Services. IMLS issued [a statement](#) as did [ALA](#). As we have discussed during the past three years, IMLS provides funding for libraries to all fifty states, and supports system services including delivery.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Elders of the Internet: Our video launched last week! An extensive publicity campaign centered around Library Lovers Month (February) and Library Lovers Day (February 14) is underway. 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.

Advocacy talking points: Mary is working with Marci Merola, formerly head of the advocacy office at ALA, on talking points for all types of libraries to use when telling their stories to funders, legislators, users and other stakeholders. Members of AISLE are assisting us with the talking points for school libraries, and academic, special and public librarians are assisting us with points for these libraries. We will share with the board when they are finished.

AISLE: We are continuing our meetings with AISLE, having held one each in January and February. We continue to discuss training and other issues we share. There is a full report in *This Month at RAILS*.

As you know, we are trying to forge a closer relationship with AISLE 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: Thanks very much to the RAILS staff and board members who have attended the ILA meetups. 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 with 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 January. My guest was Amy delaFuente and we discussed the census and the many interesting and creative projects and programs that libraries are undertaking to ensure a complete count in Illinois.

Forreston Public Library visit: I visited the Forreston board of trustees the evening of January 29 to talk to them about hiring a new library director as well as all of the programs that RAILS offers to trustees. This library has a budget that is less than \$40,000 per year and a staff of 2 part-time people. They have a very nice building despite the low budget, having done some fundraising a few years ago. They hope to do more fundraising so they can increase programs for the community. Here is part of a note that one of the trustees sent to us:

“I would like to thank you for visiting with our board. Just having someone else see and understand what we are working on here gave us all a sense of relief. I have already spoken with Carolyn, at PrairieCat, and we have come up with a plan moving forward. We are coming together as a board and it is just so wonderful to see and be a part of. I greatly appreciate you and your program. I can’t wait to show you how far Forreston Library has come, and will continue to improve. We are familiarizing ourselves with RAILS website and have even watched some of the webinars.”

It is so rewarding to help these under-resourced libraries, to see all that they want to do for their communities and to raise their awareness of how RAILS can help.

Prepare libraries for the future

Data Consulting Visits are a new training service RAILS is exploring to offer a hands-on approach to building a data culture at our library members. Grant Halter, Data Analyst at RAILS, recognizes the challenge members have applying data concepts and techniques learned from a presentations and webinars to their own situations. These Data Visits provide personalized data culture training through on-site consultations with members to address any data-related concerns and create a plan to use data more effectively and efficiently.

In January, Grant visited Rockford Public Library where he met with Executive Director Lynn Stainbrook and other staff to review their data culture and discuss how they can better implement data in their work. The group worked on gaining a deeper understanding of writing value statements by applying a data-focused logic model and how to connect data collection and analysis work with the strategic initiatives.

RAILS staff expect this service to be in high demand and are currently looking into the best way of offering this service to members or all types and sizes.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

March meeting: Our March 27 board meeting will take place at University of Illinois at Chicago Richard J. Daley Library. Of course, it will also be available via teleconference at the usual sites. Gwen Gregory is arranging a tour and we will have lunch, as usual. We will work out logistics related to parking and transportation and provide full information in advance of the March meeting.

Nominating Committee: We are beginning to work on the annual board election. Seats and terms up for election this year are:

Dave Barry, Public Library Trustee
Gwen Gregory, Academic Library
Jenna Nemec-Loise, School Library
Dee Runnels, Public Library Trustee
Nadia Sheikh, Public Library Trustee

This Month at RAILS – February 2020

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing



Find More Illinois Continues to Grow!

[Find More Illinois](#) provides a single discovery interface that draws from the online catalogs of participating libraries. Anyone can search multiple Illinois library catalogs at once. Patrons and staff of participating libraries can log in to place interlibrary loan requests. Over 3 million items are currently available through Find More Illinois.

Five high school libraries, one academic library, and over 30 public libraries now participate. Our newest members include: Bloomington Public Library, Cambridge Public Library District, Clinton Township Public Library, Frankfort Public Library District, Hometown Public Library, Walnut Public Library District, and Winfield Public Library. Additional new libraries are always welcome!

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

Inkie.org Continues to Grow in Popularity

[Inkie.org](#) has been generating a lot of interest among Illinois libraries and library users. RAILS staff have given a number of presentations about this self-publishing suite of resources in recent weeks, including at [Galena LitFest](#), PrairieCat Delegates Day, the Warrenville Public Library writer's group, and at a visit to Elizabeth Township Public Library.



Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, also participated in a panel discussion at Chicago Public Library about the [Indie Author Project](#) and inkie.org on January 17. Representatives from BiblioBoard and [Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author project](#) winners were also part of the panel.

Approximately 50 people attended and raised several excellent questions and discussion points.

eRead Illinois Update

RAILS recently added all available [2021 Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award titles](#) to the [eRead Illinois](#) collection. We also continue to monitor the demand for popular titles, including

new Macmillan releases. RAILS also plans to revise and simplify the sign up and renewal procedures for eRead Illinois this spring.

ALA Midwinter Conference Features Many Discussions on E-Resources

Three RAILS staff members attended the American Library Association Midwinter Conference in Philadelphia, January 23 – 27. Many meetings focused on e-content issues. Highlights included:

- John Sargent, Macmillan CEO, [answering questions from concerned librarians](#) about Macmillan’s eight week embargo on new e-book titles
- An update on the American Library Association’s #eBooksForAll campaign and news of possible action at the federal and state government levels to protect e-lending in libraries
- An update on the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and SimplyE

Other E-Resources Highlights

Over 30 people attended the January quarterly RAILS E-Content Meeting. There was a good discussion about the state of e-books in RAILS member libraries and other related issues.

RAILS staff participated in a conference call with the Hachette Book Group, one of the “Big Five Publishers.” Each of the five have different terms, conditions, and pricing for library e-books. Some, including Hachette, have recently adopted more restrictive and expensive licensing terms for libraries. Hachette reached out to RAILS to discuss e-content challenges libraries currently face, as well as goals and opportunities around digital content in public libraries.

RAILS staff attended the January Electronic Subscription Managers Network Group (ELSUM) meeting at Barrington Public Library District. As a result of the meeting, RAILS is working on a web page on data privacy that will be available to all members in April. Stay tuned for further details.

Explore More Illinois Update



A total of 249 libraries currently participate in our [Explore More Illinois](#) statewide cultural pass program. The [American Writers Museum](#) in Chicago is the newest of 29 attractions. RAILS staff recently gave presentations about Explore More at the PrairieCat Delegates Assembly and the Circulation Managers Roundtable in Lincolnshire.

Fostering Networking & Collaboration

RAILS and IACRL to Co-Host Spark Event

On Friday, May 15, RAILS and the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL) will co-host a peer-to-peer learning event called [Spark: Connect and Get Fired Up!](#) This one-day

event will include lightning talks, breakout tables, and a chance for academic libraries in Illinois to learn more about trends in the field. Staff members from all Illinois libraries are invited.

Telling the Library Story

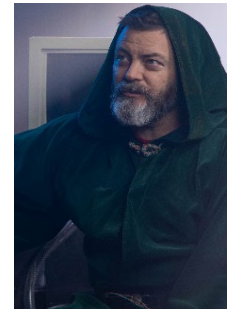
Helping Members Tell Their Story



New RAILS Video Debuts!

RAILS has been working with the Imagination marketing firm on a new video as a part of our [My Library Is...](#) campaign. This is a follow-up to the very popular [“Dreams Take Flight”](#) video.

The new video is in response to many requests from RAILS member libraries of all types (academic, public, school, and special) for help in showing that libraries are still needed in the age of Google and the internet. It stars Nick Offerman, who is best known for his role in the *Parks & Recreation* sitcom. Lauren Offerman, Nick’s sister and library director at Three Rivers Public Library District in Channahon, was instrumental in recruiting her brother to participate in the video, and we are very grateful for her assistance!



RAILS officially rolled out the new video on February 14 (Library Lovers Day) with an extensive social media and publicity campaign, and we will continue to promote it on an ongoing basis. The Illinois Library Association is also showing the video at their legislative meetups. Please help us spread the word about the value of libraries by telling all of your friends, family, colleagues, etc. about the new video and inviting them to watch at mylibraryis.org/librarylovers.

My Library Is... Facebook Challenge Results



In January, RAILS held a week-long social media engagement campaign to increase awareness of our My Library Is... campaign. We invited members to share talking points, marketing plans, social media posts, and other efforts to tell their library’s story. Every day, a new prompt was posted on the RAILS Facebook page.

Overall, there were 26 comments and 10 likes for the seven individual posts. Our goal statistics appear below. Although we missed the Weekly Total Reach target, RAILS surpassed its Daily New Likes total and barely missed the target for Daily Engaged Users. The 44 Daily New Likes represent the highest total for any one month since RAILS began its Facebook page.

Goals	Daily New Likes	Daily Page Engaged Users	Weekly Total Reach
2019 Average Monthly	22.7	51.3	2,344
Goal for January 2020	36	80	3,750
<i>January 2020 Actual</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>1,777</i>

We summarized the [takeaways from the campaign](#) in a My Library Is... blog post. We are very grateful to all of the libraries that participated!

Helping Libraries Get the Most Out of the My Library Is... Website

RAILS has a [new video series](#) on how to use the [My Library Is... campaign website](#), based on the Champions training described in last month's board report. Each video focuses on a different aspect of the website. All videos are available to anyone at any time and will help libraries take advantage of the growing number of helpful resources available through the site.

Upcoming RAILS Online Roundtable: Library Data for Advocacy

On Tuesday, March 3, at 1 p.m., RAILS will host an [online roundtable on using library data for advocacy](#). This event will include a short presentation by Amy Stefanski, District Librarian, Dunlap CUSD #323. Participants will be invited to talk about how they are using their own data to tell the story of the library to teachers, parents, administrators, community members, and others.

My Library Is ... Website Helps Libraries Find Funding to Tell Their Stories

One of the things we heard as we were gathering feedback for our My Library Is... campaign last year is that libraries had projects they wanted to do, but didn't know how to fund them. A new page with [funding resources](#) has been added to the My Library Is... site, under the Get Started tab. We will keep adding to the site as we uncover new funding resources.

Upcoming My Library Is... Continuing Education Offerings

[“A Librarian’s Crash Course in Marketing: The Beginner’s Guide to Promoting Your Collection and Events”](#) webinar, March 10, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Advocating for and Helping Members Advocate for Libraries

Working with AISLE to Advocate for School Libraries

RAILS is partnering with the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Executive Board and the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) to develop ways to advocate for school

libraries and to provide and promote CE opportunities for school librarians. We have had three meetings via Zoom thus far. The latest meeting was on February 12. Topics discussed include:

- How RAILS and AISLE can work together to promote the My Library Is... campaign and the talking points for school libraries that RAILS is currently working on (in addition to talking points for academic, public, and special libraries)
- The results of a recent AISLE survey on school professional development needs and how RAILS can help via our CE offerings
- Collecting better data on how many school districts in Illinois have a library and how many have a full-time certified librarian
- Developing a school leader collaborative and identifying administrators who support school libraries

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

RAILS CE Event Grant Funds Event for School Librarians

A “Thoughtful Planning Supports Student Learning” workshop was held on January 31 at the Garfield Park Office of Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Funded by a [RAILS CE Event Grant](#), the day-long workshop focused on developing an action plan to show progress toward achieving state-endorsed standards and supporting student learning.



There were about 40 attendees, with a near 50/50 split between CPS and non-CPS librarians. Several remarked how valuable it was for CPS and non-CPS librarians to network, and asked RAILS to offer additional opportunities in the future. With participants traveling from as far away as Moline, we hope to replicate this workshop at another RAILS location in the spring.

Upcoming RAILS CE

“Methods for Creating and Assessing Library Outreach Initiatives” webinar, [February 25](#), noon – 1:30 p.m.

“Truly Great Children’s Books of 2019” webinar, [March 3](#), 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

“Getting It All Done: Goal Setting and Delegation” workshop

- [Wednesday, March 4](#), 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Morris Area Public Library

- [Wednesday, March 11](#), 1 p.m.–4 p.m., East Moline Public Library

Free ALA Exhibit Hall Passes!

RAILS will have an exhibit booth at the American Library Association (ALA) annual conference in Chicago in June. As a part of our booth experience, we are offering our member library staff [free passes](#) to the exhibit hall at the ALA Annual Conference, June 25–30. Libraries must individually register each employee who plans to attend for a pass.

Ensuring All Libraries Are Able to Offer the Best Possible Service

Certification Update

All RAILS member libraries are required to complete an annual online certification process to continue to receive system services (delivery, CE, etc.) and to qualify for Illinois State Library grant programs. The deadline is March 31, and libraries must also complete the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan & Reciprocal Borrowing Statistical Survey.

The RAILS Certification Team is working hard to contact and work with RAILS libraries of all types to ensure they complete the process in time. The following are completion statistics as of February 12:

Traffic Survey:

70% of all libraries have completed the traffic survey with this breakdown by library type:

- Academic - 63% completed
- Public - 75% completed
- School - 73% completed
- Special - 58% completed

Certification:

65% of all libraries have completed the entire certification process:

- Academic - 54% completed
- Public - 67% completed
- School - 69% completed
- Special - 53% completed

***Serving Our Public 4.0* Available at Discounted Price for RAILS Members**

RAILS has copies of *Serving Our Public 4.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries, 2020* available at a discounted price of \$25 each (includes shipping). The book offers help to public libraries in completing applications for state grant programs and also includes a CD. The book is also a great resource for trustees and library boards.

RAILS members can purchase the standards through the [RAILS website](#). The cost is \$50 when purchased through the Illinois Library Association (ILA), \$30 for ILA members. As of February 12, RAILS has received orders from 40 libraries for 120 books.

Developing Library Leaders

Directors University

Registration is open for the fourth annual [Directors University](#), which will be held June 1 – 5, at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. RAILS will again play a prominent role in planning and executing the week's activities. With approximately 40 new public library directors across the RAILS area since last year's event, we are anticipating a full roster again in 2020.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

RAILS Helps Libraries Get out the Count



The U.S. Census Bureau has a variety of materials available to help libraries promote completion of the Census 2020 questionnaire, including reproducible flyers and posters; customizable social media content and graphics; instructional videos; and information targeted at different hard-to-count populations, such as children, older adults, different races/ethnicities, the homeless, renters, rural audiences, migrant workers, and more.

RAILS has brought all of this information together in a census toolkit on our [Library Pulse page](#) for the census.

RAILS also has a special section in our weekly *E-News* to highlight some of these resources, as well as the latest developments with Census 2020 and training resources.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

Member Visits

Between late January and early February, RAILS visited the following member libraries in the Northbrook, Burr Ridge, and Bloomington regions:

School libraries:

- Blue Ridge CUSD 18

- Lexington CUSD 7
- Loyola Academy

Special libraries:

- DuPage County Law Library
- Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital
- North East Multi-Regional Training (NEMRT)

Evaluating the Impact of RAILS Programs/Services

RAILS Social Media Survey

The RAILS Social Media Team created [a brief survey on social media usage and member libraries](#). The results of the survey will help the team focus messaging and tailor content to specific platforms. All library staff from all RAILS member libraries are invited to take the survey by February 28.

Engaging in Innovative Projects on Statewide & National Level

SimplyE Update

RAILS currently participates in a pilot grant program for SimplyE, a library-developed, open source eReader and eBook discovery app that simplifies the library user's experience in finding, borrowing, and reading e-books. For libraries with multiple e-book collections, it provides a single patron interface using the free SimplyE e-reading app for both IOS and Android devices. Without this interface, patrons would have to search the library's different e-book collections separately.

Until recently, OverDrive audiobooks were not part of SimplyE, which was a deal-breaker for participating in the project for most libraries. In January, OverDrive signed an agreement to include audiobooks. RAILS is now exploring costs and strategies to implement the program and will invite additional libraries to expand our pilot program. Stay tuned for further details!