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 : Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond	
Activities/Accomplishments	**Benefits/Impact**
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.	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).
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.	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.
RAILS provided ongoing support for the [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA) and [Illinois Digital Heritage Hub](#) throughout 2019, including: • 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 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 *RAILS E-News* and other means • Five RAILS staff members attending DPLAfest	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. 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.) 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. 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.
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.	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).
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.	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.

Strategic Plan Objective : Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing	
Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
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.	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.
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.	At the end of 2019, FMI participants included: • 1 academic library • 33 public libraries • 4 school libraries • 3 libraries in implementation process
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.	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.
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.	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.
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.	We anticipate that this plan will encourage participation by libraries with large collections that would significantly enhance resource sharing.
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.	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.)
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).	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.
RAILS offered Catalog Membership grants to help fund startup costs for potential LLSAP/consortia members. The application deadline was April 17 and grants were awarded to: • Rock Falls Elementary School District - $17,939 to join Rock River Library Consortium • Indian Trails Public Library - $51,465 to join CCS	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. Joining a consortium makes the cost of resource sharing more affordable for libraries and also increases the number of resources available to library patrons through consortial catalogs.

• Milledgeville Public Library - $8,409 to join Rock River Library Consortium • Astoria Public Library - $6,458.95 to join RSA	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.
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.	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.
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.	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.
RAILS held its 4th annual in-service day for all consortial staff in November.	Consortia staff rarely have an opportunity to get together to exchange news, ideas, and best practices.
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.	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.
A RAILS staff member planned and moderated a panel on "Implementing Linked Data in Libraries" at the 2019 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference.	Linked Data can help libraries make their catalog records discoverable by search engines, which furthers resource sharing.

Strategic Plan Objective : 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

Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
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.	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.
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.	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.
RAILS investigated the possibility of automating internal daily delivery paperwork by capturing information electronically with tablets or other devices.	RAILS determined that this (and other RAILS work) would require an in-house software developer. This position was filled in late 2019.

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).	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.
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.	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.

Strategic Plan Objective : 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	
Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
eRead Illinois Axis 360 In 2019, RAILS made several enhancements to eRead Illinois and engaged with members via a variety of activities, including: • 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 **BiblioBoard/inkie.org** 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 Pressbooks Public (to help patrons create an e-book), Indie Illinois,	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. 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. 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. Going Unbound allows libraries to purchase additional content that is available only to their patrons. The app in place at the end of 2019 was a major improvement and we have received positive feedback from members. Response to the newsletter has been positive thus far. Staff from over 40 libraries attended the webinar. Analyzing our current strategy will help to create a sustainable purchasing model that meets user demand while remaining within the budget. Inkie.org provides a creative outlet for library patrons and helps libraries to make connections with local authors. 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

and marketing materials libraries can use to promote inkie.org.

RAILS purchased $50,000 worth of additional content (including Spanish language materials) especially for school libraries for our BiblioBoard platform.

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.

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.

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.

Publisher Restrictions on Library E-Books

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:

- 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.

were seen roaming the exhibit hall sporting an octopus tattoo (the inkie.org mascot).

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.

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.

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.

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.

This is a huge issue for RAILS members, and all libraries, and it is important for RAILS to help libraries respond.

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.

With all of the scattered information available on this issue, it is helpful for libraries to have all important information together in one place.

14 people attended and there was a productive discussion. The group decided to meet regularly in the future.

RAILS staff also shared information about all of our e-resources via a variety of venues, including: • 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 • 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 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.	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. Presentations offer an opportunity to speak to a number of RAILS members in one setting, engage in conversation, and get feedback about member concerns and ideas for future action. CARLI gave notification in October 2019 that they elected not to move forward with this collaboration.
Explore More Illinois 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	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.

Strategic Plan Objective : 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

Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
RAILS initiated the following new discount and group purchase offers in 2019: • Burbio (September) – free, automated community events calendar platform • HF Group – consolidated bindery pickup service run through RAILS delivery	Number of library participants with cost savings (where available): Burbio – 14 libraries launched/in process.

• 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	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 Public Web Browser: RAILS subsidized purchase for all libraries: $5,875. RBdigital Unlimited – 9 libraries: $28,920 purchase; $231,080 savings over original pricing 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
RAILS worked with IHLS on multiple deals throughout 2019.	Collaboration increases economies of scale, broadens library exposure to deals, and strengthens system partnerships.
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	Electronic resources are very expensive, and it is helpful for library staff and users to give them a "trial run" before committing to purchase.
RAILS staff shared information about RAILS deals and discounts via a variety of venues, including: • Presenting the Swank deal at the AVID (Audiovisual Information & Discussion) networking meeting • Discussion at the ELSUM (Electronic Subscription Managers) networking meetings	These meetings provide a wealth of information about library concerns, experiences, and needs regarding electronic resources.

Strategic Plan Objective : 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

Activities/Accomplishments	Benefits/Impact
RAILS offered partnership grants for member libraries of all types to collaborate with other libraries, businesses, nonprofits, and/or government agencies. Four projects were selected to receive grants in June: • 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	Grant awardees were publicized in the weekly *RAILS E-News*, 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. 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.

• 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	

Strategic Plan Objective : 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	
Activities/Accomplishments	**Benefits/Impact**
General Networking Events 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. RAILS initiated online roundtables in 2019: hour-long discussions on specific topics hosted by RAILS networking groups and held via Zoom. 2019 roundtables included: • "Programming & Collections for Those with Dementia/ Alzheimer's" • "20's and 30's Programming" • "Census 2020 Services & Resources" • "Census 2020 Programming" • "Social Media Marketing" [See more info on roundtables under Goal Two below]	All types of RAILS libraries have asked us to schedule more networking opportunities, both in-person and online. RAILS held five meetups in 2019. Online events provide networking opportunities for those library staff who find it hard to leave their buildings, including staff from small and nonpublic libraries. 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.
Academic Libraries 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). RAILS and IACRL also hosted an "after-hours" Illinois academic library meetup at the 2019 Association of College & Research Libraries conference in Cleveland.	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. 25 people attended this event

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	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.
RAILS helped launch a For-Profit/Small Academic Library networking group, including holding a kickoff meeting in January.	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.
School Libraries	
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.	Eight people attended this event. Attendees submitted an application to AISLE to become a chapter.
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.	Approximately 40 school library staff members attended, which is a very good number for this type of event!
Special Libraries	
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.	30 people participated, including librarians from Illinois and Iowa.