

17 April 2020

**TO: RAILS Board of Directors**

**FROM: Deirdre Brennan**

**SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – March – April, 2020**

Needless to say, the last couple of months have been unprecedented, so this report will be unusual as well. We have been pretty much consumed by COVID-19 related issues. I am going to begin with an overview of how COVID-19 has specifically affected RAILS, and then move on to other (still COVID-19) topics, and also include some regular (normal) subjects.

We closed all of our buildings effective March 17 and suspended all delivery. We did this in consultation with the State Library, IHLS and CARLI. Items that were in the delivery system at the time of suspension are stored at the hubs.

Explore More Illinois and Find More Illinois are also suspended.

The ALA annual conference that was to be held in Chicago this June has been cancelled. The last time it was cancelled was in 1945.

All staff are being paid their regular salaries and regular hours.

We had our buildings “deep cleaned” over the weekend of March 28-29.

On April 1, I went into the office along with Jim Kregor and Jeanne Johansen to pay some bills and sign checks. We were especially concerned about some of our smaller vendors, like the cleaning services and snow removal companies, as well as libraries doing census work as part of our grant.

Members of the Finance staff will continue to go into the office, mostly every other week, in order to process bills. Some of this can be done remotely, but some cannot – because of required internal controls.

Many of us are working from home – I would guess even harder than when we worked in the office, because there is so much to do, and some tasks are just more difficult when you are not in the office. You can’t just walk over to someone’s office and have a chat or make a decision. Everything has to be scheduled. And, if you are an extrovert like me, it’s often pretty painful!

Generally speaking, delivery staff are not working because their regular jobs are not happening. We do ask them to attend online training and the staff meeting next week is mandatory. But, the reality is that they can't work because we suspended their jobs.

**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**

## COVID-19

I doubt there has ever been as much resource sharing of expertise, ideas, stories, and concerns in the history of systems as there has been since March 13. Our first special Member Update was March 16 (last day we were open) and we had almost 500 attendees, the limit of our Zoom licenses. The second special update was on March 30 – again with almost 500 attendees.

We have seen questions and concerns evolve since March 16. At first, the decisions and questions were around whether to close buildings, for how long, how to do it, whether to offer curbside service, keep book drops open and the like. Soon, we had moved on to questions about how to manage staff work remotely, questions about cleaning buildings and dealing with possible infection among staff, how to manage virtual meetings of boards, FOIA and OMA.

The next phase was more about how to offer services virtually and unfortunately this turned pretty quickly into discussion of furloughs and layoffs. Also, as federal relief packages were passed, libraries needed assistance understanding their eligibility and how to apply. Our member updates have been greatly appreciated, as have our webinars, Zoom meetings, COVID-19 pulse page and general and nearly continuous assistance.

## LLSAP support

We will be holding the regularly scheduled Consortia Committee meeting on April 20. We will provide updates on LLSAP annual support and discuss with the directors their plans for helping libraries reopen.

## Census 2020

RAILS will receive an additional \$75,000 to assist libraries with census outreach beyond the collar counties. Our original plans to use programs, special events and other kinds of direct in-person contact to encourage census completion have gone by the wayside. We are working with a marketing firm that has done work with other Regional Intermediaries in Illinois on a big social media push in different languages and via multiple channels.

## Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

### COVID-19

A very important discussion that has been taking place revolves around the nature of essential library services. We have been making the point that while librarians are not essential the same way that first responders and health care workers are during this crisis, we are essential to the building and keeping of a civil, engaged and enlightened society. Even though our buildings are closed our services are open, and they are essential.

We surveyed our member libraries about the nature of virtual services they are offering. The [results of the survey](#) are on our website and very enlightening.

### AISLE

We are continuing to meet monthly with representatives of AISLE and IHLS. I submitted a program proposal for the ILA conference that will report on successful advocacy for school libraries by library trustees working with school administrators. Michael Campbell attended our last meeting with AISLE.

On April 23, we will be meeting again and one topic of discussion will be collaborating on virtual summer reading programs. Summer reading programs have come up as an area of concern because they may have to be cancelled. These programs are hugely important to kids and families in the summer, and have been shown to be very important in maintaining a child's reading ability while school is out.

## Help libraries be the best they can be

### COVID-19

RAILS is continuing to provide training, of course, in the form of webinars. We are also continuing virtual networking sessions and visits with member libraries.

The State Library has suspended library certification for this year. They have told us that our membership will consist of all libraries that were members as of July 1, 2019, as well as any that the board has officially approved since then.

## Prepare libraries for the future

### COVID-19 and safe handling of library materials

I have been actively engaged with a group led by IMLS director Crosby Kemper looking into the safe handling and cleaning of library materials for when libraries reopen. Disinfecting materials and keeping staff and the public safe is a huge member concern. I should have more concrete information at the board meeting.

The State Library has agreed to relax the rules related to non-resident cards during the crisis. Libraries have been offering temporary cards so that families and students can access their online resources for educational and other purposes – surely related to filing for unemployment, job search, understanding the stimulus bills, etc. Resources as well as online access to professional assistance from librarians is critical for everyone during this time.

## Aim to be the best library system in the country

Of course, our first concern has been to keep our own staff safe and whole. We had a virtual staff meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, April 14 that included 87 staff members – delivery and sorting staff were able to attend which they are usually not able to as they are busy delivering and sorting. There were lots of questions about reopening plans, safe materials handling, how are people coping with young children while working, etc.

Soon we will begin to have our own reopening discussions, particularly as it relates to delivery. Obviously, this needs to be coordinated statewide.

Our board election will take place as scheduled. We have competitive races for every seat except the school seat. Open seats are:

- Public Library Trustee (3)
- Academic Library (1)
- School Library (1)

The election will start on Wednesday, April 15 and run through May 8.

As has been true in past years, the May board meeting will be held at 10 am to accommodate Memorial Day weekend plans.

## This Month at RAILS – March/April 2020

### *Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing*

#### Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing

##### **Deadline Extended for RAILS Catalog Membership Grants**

RAILS offers Catalog Membership Grants to help fund startup costs for any RAILS member library that isn't currently an LLSAP member. (RAILS LLSAPs are: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RRLC, RSA-NFP, and SWAN.)

RAILS is extending the deadline for our most recent round of grants to May 15. Funds will be awarded for projects with expenditures beginning in FY 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). More information, including eligibility criteria, grant priorities, and an application checklist libraries can use to plan their projects are available on the [RAILS website](#).

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

##### **eRead Illinois Axis 360 Update**

RAILS has revised, simplified, and streamlined the [eRead Illinois](#) renewal process. Participating libraries only have to complete one step to renew their participation in Axis 360 this year.



In addition, we estimate an 80% reduction in the processing time for RAILS libraries - an estimated savings of at least 420 hours and \$8,400 for RAILS and our eRead member libraries per year - and better accuracy due to auto-fills on the new digital form.

There has been a lot of interest in library e-content since COVID-19 related library closures took effect. This includes renewed interest in eRead Illinois. We have several new sign-ups for both eRead and the [Unbound program](#). We worked with Baker & Taylor (our eRead vendor) to expedite the onboarding of new libraries to allow them to respond to user needs.

##### **RAILS on the Program at 2020 Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference**

In March, Leila Heath, RAILS Library Resources and Programs Manager, and a representative from SWAN presented “Help from Consortia: Working Together for Negotiating Licenses and Contracts” at the Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference in Texas. They highlighted the impact of consortia working together, including financial benefits and strengthening of relationships. About 40 people attended the presentation.

##### **PLA Conference Discussions Focus on eRead Illinois and Other Topics**

Anna Behm, Monica Harris, and Leila Heath attended the Public Library Association (PLA)

Conference in Nashville in late February. They attended a variety of vendor meetings focusing on eRead Illinois platform options, SimplyE considerations, and potential services and deals for members. Monica was featured in the PLA 75th Anniversary video that was shown at the opening session promoting the value that PLA brings its members.

### **RAILS Hosts E-Resources Meetings for Members**

RAILS hosted the March 25 ELSUM (Electronic Subscription Managers) networking meeting via Zoom. Over 30 people attended to discuss various issues related to electronic resources, which are in even higher demand than usual due to the COVID-19 stay-at-home order.

RAILS also hosted the quarterly E-Content Networking Group meeting on April 13. A total of 36 people attended to discuss e-content issues related to COVID-19 and to learn about the e-resources RAILS is offering to our members, during COVID-19 and throughout the year.

### **Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project Partnership Update**

RAILS partners with and supports the [Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project](#) (STBF) on an ongoing basis. The STBF manuscript contest is drawing to a close and we expect the winner to be announced in April. STBF is now accepting submissions for the annual author contest, with winners expected to be announced in October.

### **Explore More Illinois Update**



[Explore More Illinois](#) is currently suspended due to COVID-19. Most of the attractions are closed. We worked with Quipu, our software company, to cancel outstanding reservations and we notified affected library patrons via email.

To help Explore More library patrons during the stay-at-home period, RAILS compiled and posted an online [list of free virtual tours and other cultural/entertainment opportunities](#). The list includes gallery tours, performances, and even virtual hikes through national parks. We update the list frequently.

Prior to the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, RAILS added a number of attractions to Explore More. Our newest attractions include:

- Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art/Oak Brook
- Peoria Park District Golf Learning Center & Academy/Peoria
- Peoria Park District Owens Recreation Center Ice Arena/Peoria
- Peoria Park District RiverPlex Recreation and Wellness Center/Peoria
- Peoria PlayHouse and Children's Museum/Peoria

We now have 250 libraries participating in Explore More Illinois, and have started the process of adding Illinois Heartland Library System [SHARE libraries](#) to the program.

RAILS and Quipu also created an Explore More Illinois [promotional video](#) for library users and potential attractions. The video is available via the Explore More website and gives step-by-step instructions on how to log into the site, search for attractions, and make a reservation.

## Improving Physical Delivery Services

### Phase Two of RAILS Delivery Project

Greg Pronevitz, the consultant RAILS has been working with to help us plan for the future of delivery, has begun phase two of his work. On April 20, Greg will release an RFI seeking information from vendors across the country on potential efficient and cost-effective delivery strategies.

## Providing Greater Purchasing Power

### New Deals & Discounts

For pricing and more information on all of the following offers, visit the [Deals & Discounts](#) page of the RAILS website.

EBSCO – includes packages for public and K-12 Libraries with a variety of core databases and additional choices from a list of options

Learning Express – e-learning solution that provides support to students and professionals for academic skill-building, standardized test prep, career certification test prep, and more

LibraryAware/NextReads – includes templates/tools to create newsletters, bookmarks, shelf talkers, flyers, etc. for promoting books and other resources in the library and beyond

[PressReader](#) for Libraries – available on iOS and Android, provides remote access to thousands of newspapers and magazines from 120 countries and 60 different languages

RBdigital Discounts:

- RBdigital Unlimited Magazines collection – includes over 3,800 unlimited, simultaneous-access popular digital magazines from the U.S. and around the world. Also includes youth titles.
- RBdigital Unlimited Comics collection – contains over 1,500 unlimited, simultaneous-access comics' volumes and graphic novels. Also includes youth titles.

Transparent Language Online - provides unlimited, simultaneous-access to over 100 languages, including ESL

Swank Movie Licensing - allows unlimited showings of thousands of movies, from classics to new releases. Also includes materials to help libraries promote events and engage patrons.

## Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

### Upcoming RAILS Online Roundtables

[RAILS Online Roundtables](#) are hour-long forums held via Zoom on a specific topic. Online roundtables emphasize peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of best practices. Each roundtable features a brief presentation by one or more presenters, and all library staff from all Illinois libraries are welcome to attend. All roundtables are archived for later viewing.

RAILS is working on hosting an online roundtable approximately once a week while the COVID-19 crisis continues. RAILS planned the following roundtables for April and May:

- [Libraries & Facebook Live](#) – April 15
- [Hosting an Online Author Visit](#) – April 24
- [Shaping a Library Podcast](#) – April 29, 10 - 11 a.m.
- [Solo Marketers in the Library](#) – May 14, 1 - 2 p.m.

### RAILS Online Roundtable: School Library Tech Tips

On April 8, RAILS hosted an online roundtable on tech tips for school libraries. The event included a presentation by Ben Wagoner, LRC Director/Media Specialist, Saint Charles North High School. The event was especially targeted at school libraries that are moving more learning online.

### RAILS and IACRL to Host First-Ever Spark Event on May 15

RAILS and the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries will co-host a professional development/networking opportunity for academic library staff on Friday, May 15, from 10 a.m. – noon. “Spark: Connect and Get Fired Up!” was originally scheduled to take place at Illinois State University's Milner Library. It will now take place via Zoom. There is no cost to attend and a recorded version will be available following the live event. [More info is available on L2.](#)



## Telling the Library Story

### Helping Members Tell Their Story



#### **RAILS *Elders of the Internet* Video a Huge Success!**

In February, we told you about our cooperative effort with the Imagination marketing firm to produce a [video](#) showing why libraries are still needed in the internet age. This was one of the top needs expressed by RAILS members in the survey RAILS conducted at the start of our My Library Is... campaign.

The video debuted on the [My Library Is... website](#) on February 14 (Library Lovers Day) and we had 601 pageviews on the My Library Is... website that day. Our highest ever pageview total for a single day came on February 19, when there were 673 pageviews. February 19 was a Wednesday, the day the *RAILS E-News* publishes. We almost always feature articles about the My Library Is... campaign in the *E-News*, and we consistently receive the highest traffic to the campaign website on that day.

The video was also a hit on social media. A report on the video's reach via social media is attached to this report.

#### **Preview of New RAILS Talking Points for All Types of Libraries**

When RAILS surveyed our members at the start of our My Library Is... campaign to determine how we could best help them, libraries of all types told us they needed talking points to advocate for their library with different stakeholders.

RAILS has been working with Marci Merola, former Director of the Office for Library Advocacy at the American Library Association, on this project. We also reached out to several members from different types of libraries to get input for the talking points. We received some very valuable feedback, including from RAILS Board members Halle Cox, Gwen Gregory, and Sarah McHone-Chase.

Marci worked with a graphic designer to develop the talking points into infographics (attached at the end of this report). We are putting the final touches on a version of the talking points that identifies sources used as appropriate. Then we will post the infographics and source documents on the My Library Is... website and publicize them to members.

#### **Deadline Extended for RAILS My Library Is... Grant Applications**

The [RAILS My Library Is... Grant](#) program provides an opportunity for our members to focus on projects that help tell the library story and that increase visibility and support for all types of libraries. Libraries, working alone or with partners, can apply for up to \$5,000 in funding to

support a campaign or project that promotes library programs or libraries in general. To give more libraries an opportunity to apply, RAILS has extended the application deadline to Friday, May 22.

## ***Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be***

### **Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development**

#### **Sexual Harassment Prevention Training**

A total of 442 RAILS members attended our “Sexual Harassment Prevention in the Workplace” webinar on April 2, by far the largest number of attendees we have seen for a single webinar since the RAILS CE department was formed in 2013!

This webinar was offered in part to help members comply with the training requirements of the Illinois Workplace Transparency Act. The two-hour training was also recorded and is available for members to access through December 31, 2020. Despite the high number of attendees, the webinar was one of the more engaging online CE events we’ve had and featured an extensive chat discussion.

### **Ensuring All Libraries Are Able to Offer the Best Possible Service**

#### **Updates to Members Section of RAILS Website**

RAILS recently made several updates to the Members section of our website, including completely revising the [Become a Member](#) section. The purpose of these revisions is to streamline the process for libraries to become system members and to make the benefits of system membership clearer. The section also includes a new RAILS membership application which was approved by the Illinois State Library.

### **Developing Library Leaders**

#### **Elevate 2020 Cancelled; Directors University Postponed**

Elevate 2020, scheduled for April 18, has officially been cancelled. Elevate is an annual statewide library initiative to recruit and nurture future Illinois library leaders. RAILS staff help plan/support/implement the event in partnership with the Illinois State Library (ISL), the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), and the Illinois Library Association (ILA).

Directors University 2020, scheduled for June 1-5, has been postponed. This annual week-long university provides training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors. The planning committee is currently looking at either rescheduling in the fall and/or shifting content online. RAILS staff serve on the planning committee, along with ISL, IHLS, and ILA staff.

## ***Preparing Libraries for the Future***

### **Helping Libraries Respond to Change**

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating a wide variety of major changes and challenges for RAILS member libraries of all types. The following are some of the activities RAILS has been working on to help our members respond to these changes/challenges.

#### **RAILS COVID-19 Library Pulse Page**

RAILS has a section on our home page called “The Library Pulse,” to help members stay current on the latest issues/challenges affecting them. In March, we added a [Pulse Page on COVID-19](#). We frequently revise the page and add new content.

The following is just some of the information included on the page at the time of this writing:

- The latest news from RAILS and our member libraries related to COVID-19
- The latest Illinois news, including information on libraries and FEMA/IEMA funding, Governor Pritzker’s current stay-at-home order, conducting open meetings during COVID-19, and more
- The latest national/international news, including information from the American Library Association and information of interest to libraries in general
- What RAILS is doing to help our members during the pandemic
- Recordings from special RAILS Member Update sessions and information on upcoming sessions
- Other RAILS events (upcoming and recorded), including CE, online roundtables, water cooler sessions (see below), etc.
- Examples of things RAILS libraries are doing to help with COVID-19 challenges in their communities
- A list of a variety of other resources on COVID-19 related issues and challenges
- A Comments section where members are invited to share
- And much more!

#### **Special RAILS Member Updates on COVID-19**

RAILS has been holding special member update sessions via Zoom to keep staff at RAILS libraries updated on the latest COVID-19 developments. At the time of this writing (April 15), we have held two update sessions. The first was held on March 16 and 342 people registered.

The second session was held on March 30. We had 492 total unique participants at this session. Both of these sessions were recorded and recordings are available on our [COVID-19 Library Pulse Page](#). Another session is planned for April 16 and 567 people have registered. RAILS will continue to schedule update sessions as long as there is a need/interest.

### **RAILS COVID-19 Response Survey**

In the early days of the pandemic, RAILS initiated a survey to find out what libraries were doing in response to COVID-19. The [survey](#) is still live at the time of this writing, and includes questions on library closings; how staff are being compensated during closures; what services, if any, libraries are offering while closed; and more. The survey and [survey results](#) are available on the [COVID-19 Library Pulse Page](#).

### **RAILS Develops List and Map of Closed Libraries**

Near the beginning of the pandemic, RAILS developed a [list of library closings](#) and [a map](#) showing public library closings throughout Illinois. Libraries can update their closing information as plans change by completing the [Library Closings Form](#) on the RAILS website. This form is also available on the [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#), along with the library list and map.

### **Virtual Services Survey**

RAILS is currently surveying and compiling a list of the virtual programs and services that libraries of all types are offering while their buildings are closed. So many have found ways to continue to offer essential and innovative services to their communities during the pandemic. We are also looking for ways to promote these services widely to the “outside world” to help libraries tell their stories about how they are helping their communities through the pandemic. The [survey](#) and “live” [searchable results](#) are available on the [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#).

### **RAILS Helps Coordinate Libraries’ 3D Printing Efforts to Help the Health Care Field**

Speaking of essential services (see previous article), on April 8, RAILS held a special online roundtable on how libraries can use 3D printing to create shields for healthcare workers. The event was co-hosted by the [RAILS Makerspace Networking Group](#). There was a short presentation by the Vice-President/Chief Health Information Officer of Amita Health. A total of 55 people attended. The event was also [recorded](#).

Based on the conversation at the roundtable, RAILS collaborated with the makerspace group to create a [spreadsheet](#) to gather and organize information for libraries interested in making personal protective equipment (PPE) to distribute to local health care providers. Libraries are still welcome to complete the spreadsheet, which is available on the [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#).

### **RAILS Holds Special Online Roundtable on Libraries Responding to COVID-19**

In March, RAILS held an online roundtable to discuss ways libraries are responding to COVID-19. Representatives from Vernon Area Public Library District; the Library of the Health Sciences, University of Illinois – Chicago; HR Source; and Ancel Glink also gave presentations. A total of 187 people attended the event. The event was recorded and is available via the [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#).

### **COVID-19 and Collection Care Webinar**

Staff from the Northeast Document Conservation Center presented a webinar on April 17 on mitigating risks and securing collections during the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar included a brief overview of basic handling and surface cleaning for materials in the library collection, as well as a question and answer session.

### **RAILS Online Learning Opportunities during COVID-19**

Since the beginning of the Illinois shelter-in-place on March 20, RAILS has seen great interest and demand for online learning opportunities. Over 1,800 RAILS members have registered to attend the 10 webinars scheduled between March 21 and April 21. These webinars include topics specific to the pandemic (“COVID-19 and Collection Care,” “COVID-19 and Legal Issues for Public Libraries,” etc.), as well as more typical CE content (“Libraries and Privacy Laws,” “Leveraging Data in the Library,” “Minimum Wage Forecasting,” etc.).

In addition to continuing to work with some of our regular presenters from HR Source and Ancel Glink, RAILS sent out a communication soliciting webinar presenters from our member libraries. We are currently working with several members to arrange for additional webinars in April and May focused on virtual services and related topics.

### **Available Training Opportunities in RAILS Archives**

To assist with the increased demand for online learning opportunities, particularly for member library staff who have been requested to seek training while working from home, RAILS staff compiled a [list of webinars and recorded workshops](#) available via the RAILS CE archives that we thought would be of particular interest to our members.

### **RAILS Adds Online Water Cooler Events to Help Members Socialize During COVID-19**

RAILS is now offering online water cooler events via Zoom every Thursday, from 2 – 3 p.m., to give all interested staff members from all RAILS libraries a chance to chat a bit and enjoy the company of colleagues. Participants can join via video, audio-only, or chat-only. There is a brief agenda with library and non-library topics. RAILS members (and board members) can register on L2.

### **Free E-Resources**

RAILS has posted a list of [Free and Discounted E-Content Resources](#) on the COVID-19 Library Pulse Page to help offset the impact of increased demand for remote resources and the loss of physical resources and spaces for libraries and programs. The list includes available RAILS products/services (BiblioBoard, eRead Illinois, etc.) and other offerings.

### **RAILS Takes Part in AISLE Roundtable on Current Issues**

The Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) hosted a roundtable of school library stakeholders on March 27 via Zoom. Representatives from AISLE, the Illinois State Library, RAILS, Illinois Heartland Library System, Illinois Library Association, and others spoke on current issues facing Illinois school librarians during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, talked about RAILS programs/services available to school

library staff while working from home.

## Addressing Issues Related to the Unserved

### New Library Pulse Page Dealing with Unserved Issues

RAILS recently launched a new [Library Pulse Page](#) on universal service and serving the unserved. The page includes tools and information to help us work toward our goal of ensuring that all Illinois residents have access to a public library. The page includes an introduction from RAILS Executive Director Deirdre Brennan. A letter from Greg McCormick, Director of the Illinois State Library, explains "why are people unserved?" You can also read about the results of last year's unserved survey, and other historical reports. There are also links to information on the RAILS Universal Service Committee.

## Aiming to Be the Best Library System

### Member Communication/Engagement

#### RAILS at 2020 IDEAcon Conference

For the first time, RAILS had an exhibit booth at the [Illinois Digital Educators Association conference](#) (IDEAcon) in Schaumburg in late February. We had the opportunity to engage with 126 teachers, administrators, librarians, and technology directors from schools around Illinois. Many educators were interested in learning more about eRead Illinois, BiblioBoard, inkie.org, and RAILS continuing education, and other resources they could use with their students at no cost to their school.

#### LibraryCon at Lisle Junior High School

On February 28, Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, gave two presentations on RAILS resources for schools at the LibraryCon event at Lisle Junior High School. This event was part of the Institute Day for Kane and DuPage County school librarians and over 60 people attended.

#### Member Visits to Rockford & Bloomington Regions

Between late February and early March 2020, RAILS made eight school library visits in our Rockford and Bloomington regions. Libraries visited were:

- Delavan SD #703
- Deer Creek-Mackinaw CUSD #701 (Mackinaw)
- Eswood School District #269 (Lindenwood)
- Hartsburg Emden CUSD #21 (Hartsburg)
- Illinois State University Laboratory SD #901 (Normal)

- Kings Consolidated SD #144 (Kings)
- Meridian CUSD #223 (Stillman Valley)
- Prairie Central CUSD #8 (Fairbury)

## Evaluating the Impact of RAILS Programs/Services

### Report on Recent RAILS Data Analysis and Research Activities

In March, Grant Halter, RAILS Data Coordinator & Research Analyst, facilitated the first meeting of public library data analysts at RAILS libraries. Skokie, Oak Park, and Schaumburg public libraries were represented. The goal of these quarterly meetings is to bring data analysts and data-focused staff together to share experiences, projects, and to discuss how to navigate the challenges of the position. Several people at the meeting shared that staff from other libraries had reached out to ask about their data analyst work and things to consider when hiring a similar position.

Grant proposed several data-related sessions for the 2020 Illinois Library Association conference, including: "Building a Data Culture at Your Library," "Using national and state data to advocate for your library," and having a panel of library data analysts talk about their work and answer questions from attendees.

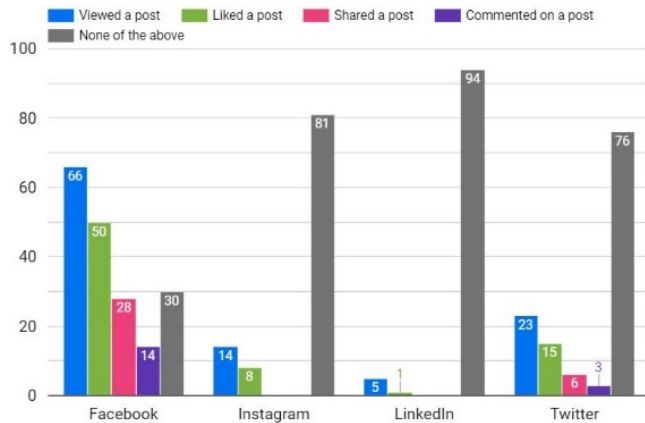
Grant was also invited to speak at Northbrook Public Library's Staff Development Day, currently scheduled for May, about data and building a data culture.

### RAILS Social Media Survey

To better understand our social media audiences, the RAILS Social Media Team created a brief survey on social media usage. Over 200 people completed the survey. The team analyzed the results and came up with some main conclusions, including:

- Facebook is the preferred platform of our users (see chart below).
- Our users are looking for news about RAILS programs and services as well as library-related news and events.
- At this point, there is no need to expand our presence on emerging social media channels.

Based on this feedback, the team will create a list of social media activities for the remainder of 2020 and beyond.



*This chart demonstrates that more of our core audience engages with RAILS Facebook account than any other platform.*

## Model Best Practices

### RAILS Staff EDI Initiative

RAILS is working on an ongoing, internal EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) initiative to teach staff EDI principles and to help eliminate unconscious bias. On March 24, the RAILS Executive Team met with Biz Lindsay-Ryan, who is a diversity and inclusion professor, trainer and consultant based in Evanston. RAILS will be contracting with Biz to provide consulting and training support for RAILS staff on our in-house initiative. Some of our initial steps will include implicit bias training for staff as well as the formation of a workplace climate team.

## Engage in Innovative Projects on Statewide and National Basis

### SimplyE Update

RAILS continues to explore costs and development issues related to expanding our efforts to bring SimplyE to RAILS libraries. SimplyE is a library-developed, open source e-reader and e-book discovery app that simplifies the library user's experience in finding, borrowing and reading library e-books.

For libraries with multiple collections, it unifies the patron experience to a single interface using the free SimplyE e-reading app. Current issues in various stages of resolution include integrating OverDrive audiobooks, BiblioBoard integration, and unsatisfactory performance on devices. RAILS attends monthly national SimplyE Council meetings via Zoom and is working with vendors regarding costs and strategies to implement the program when appropriate.



## RAILS Staff News

### **RAILS Staff Member Elected as ALA Councilor**

Monica Harris, RAILS Associate Executive Director, was elected to a three-year term as an American Library Association (ALA) Councilor at Large in the 2020 ALA election. Congratulations to Monica!

# Elders of the Internet Response Report

March 2020

## Introduction

On Friday, February 14, Library Lovers Day, RAILS and the Imagination marketing firm launched the *Elders of the Internet* video. This report is a brief update on the response and engagement of the campaign.

## Imagination Report

Imagination put together a [full report on the Library Lovers Day performance](#) (use arrows at top of page to page through report). This report notes that the campaign was able to reach 81,000 people across all platforms! It won't come as any surprise that these paid posts had the highest levels of engagements, impressions, comments, shares, and likes as post that RAILS has ever had. RAILS had record levels of engagement statistics across platforms in February.

## Other Platforms

### My Library Is... Website

The video generated a huge amount of traffic to the My Library Is... website. Monthly traffic increased by around six times what it normally was in 2019. Here the statistics for the My Library Is... website for the month of February 2020:

Month	Sessions	Users	Pageviews
2019 Average	600.33	451.00	1,768.67
Feb-20	4,040	3,380	5,889

The analytics show that the top three referral sources for February 2020 were:

- railslibraries.info
- ilovelibraries.org
- facebook.com

On the Library Lovers Page, users were prompted to take a short quiz. Over 1,000 people completed the quiz!

## Vimeo

In order to allow people to download the three different versions of the video, RAILS purchased a Vimeo account. All three videos were posted on Friday, February 21. Below are the statistics for the three videos:

Impressions: 729  
Views: 158

## Reaction

We're also pleased to say that this video has generated a very exciting reaction from library supporters around the world. Here are just a few of the ways people are finding and experiencing the video:

- ILA agreed to play the video at the legislative meetups in February and March.
- The video was featured on [ILoveLibraries.org](http://ILoveLibraries.org), ALA's public awareness website.
- In February, a librarian from the Plattsburgh Public Library contacted RAILS to download a version of the video so that her local theater would play it along with their ads.

# My Academic Library Is...



## THE BEST SEARCH ENGINE

- A single Google search can return billions of results with contradictory information. Academic librarians have special training and can help you find the most trustworthy, accurate information. They can also help you identify the difference between fake and real news.
- Google isn't always the best source of information and it's certainly not the only source. Many libraries offer books, e-books, journals, DVDs, online databases, and other materials not available via Google. Librarians can find the best source of information to meet individual needs.
- It's difficult to sort through all of the information available today via websites, social media, email, TV, books, newspapers, and magazines. Librarians can guide you through this information overload.



## AN EXCELLENT INVESTMENT

- Academic libraries benefit everyone on campus, yet they receive less than two cents on every dollar spent on higher education.



## THE CENTER OF THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

- Academic libraries are the heart of the university or college, serving everyone from students to staff and administrators, to professors and community members.
- Academic libraries provide space for individual study, as well as a place to connect to others on campus and access to shared resources like printers and other technology equipment.
- Academic libraries are open and staffed more hours than most other campus buildings.



## A COLLABORATIVE PLACE

- Academic librarians assist faculty in creating a well-rounded and robust curriculum that provides students with a more meaningful classroom experience.
- Studies indicate that students who participate in course-integrated library instruction are more likely to use library resources and have a higher GPA than those who don't.



# My Academic Library Is... (continued)

## STAFFED WITH INFORMATION EXPERTS

- Academic librarians and library staff help students and college/university staff navigate complex resources and plan their research.
- Academic libraries provide electronic resources and remote access, allowing students to use resources 24/7.
- Colleges and universities are increasingly supplementing textbooks with open educational resources (OER). Academic librarians have become even more critical, curating these new resources and teaching



students and faculty how to use them effectively.

- Evidence indicates that exposure to fully-staffed and well-funded academic libraries improves academic success, which leads to success in future endeavors: internships, employment, and continuing education.

## A SAFE PLACE FOR IDEAS

- Academic librarians select materials with a wide range of viewpoints to enrich students' learning and academic expression.



For more information and resources, visit [MyLibraryIs.org](https://MyLibraryIs.org).

# My Public Library Is...



## THE BEST SEARCH ENGINE

- Librarians prevent information overload. A single Google search can return billions of results with contradictory information. Librarians are trained professionals who can help find the most trustworthy, accurate information. They can also help identify the difference between fake and real news.
- Google isn't always the best source of information—and it's not the only source. Many libraries offer books, e-books, journals, DVDs, online databases, and other materials not available online, or not available for free online.



access and job-hunting assistance, including helping people create resumes and prepare for interviews. They also offer resources and support for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

## STAFFED WITH INFORMATION EXPERTS

- There's something for everyone at the library—thanks to librarians, who have specific training to understand the needs of their communities and to lead customers to the best print and online resources to meet those needs.
- Librarians teach users to navigate the information world, both in print and online, not only connecting them to the newest technologies, but teaching them how to evaluate and use these resources.



## AN EXCELLENT INVESTMENT

- Communities that spend more on libraries are shown to support the well-being of community members much more than those that do not.
- A very small portion of a household's property tax bill (5% or less) goes to the public library. Libraries serve the needs of the entire community with that limited amount of revenue.
- Funding libraries is an investment in the community and libraries are a smart investment. State studies show that the return on investment is between \$5-6 for every dollar spent on the library.
- Public libraries strengthen the economy of their communities. Libraries provide computer



## A CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY

- Public libraries create community, a third space, for people of all ages to meet, learn, and enjoy themselves and the company of those around them, promoting a sense of belonging. And there is no cost for admission.
- Libraries are often the only place in the community where everyone is welcome including all underserved and marginalized populations such as the homeless, immigrants, and non-English speakers. Regardless of education level, income, gender, race, or age, public libraries serve everyone.



# My Public Library Is... (continued)

- With the elimination of many social service programs, public libraries are often called upon to respond to issues like homelessness, mental illness, and the opioid crisis. Many libraries are hiring social workers. Others receive specialized training to spot signs of and handle an opioid overdose.
- Public libraries play a major role in fostering a love of reading among young children. A story time program can introduce new concepts, reinforce social and school readiness skills, and provide a model for caretakers on how they can share books, songs, and educational play activities with their children.
- Public libraries provide a variety of activities for school-age children and teens, including summer reading programs to combat the “summer slide,” online homework help, book discussion groups, and places for teens to collaborate and learn together.
- Public libraries provide a variety of activities for adults and seniors, including educational and reading programs, access to computers and computer instruction to minimize the digital divide, and social settings to lessen isolation.
- Many public libraries offer important community services, such as notary public, test proctoring, voter registration and voting sites, and passport services. They also have meeting rooms that can be used by community groups and others—often for free.
- Public libraries lend much more than books. Mobile hotspots, tools, musical instruments, craft supplies, sporting equipment, and even cake pans can be borrowed from some libraries.

## HELPING PEOPLE NAVIGATE THE DIGITAL WORLD

- For many, the library is the primary source of computer and internet access. Over 1 million people in Illinois do not have internet access or only have access to a cellular data plan. Public libraries help bridge the digital divide.
- Because government forms, health information, and often, employment opportunities have moved online, the library's internet access has become a lifeline for those without access at home.
- In a world of technological change, librarians help people learn and adapt to the latest technology tools and advances. They provide training and support for first-time internet and computer users, as well as those looking to improve their skills.

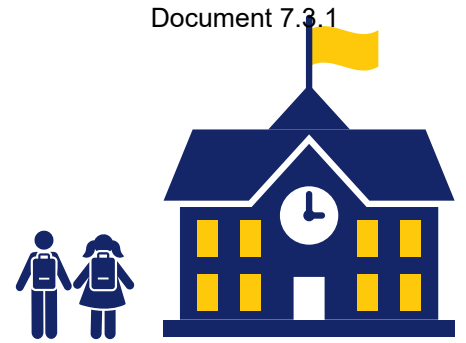


## A SAFE PLACE FOR IDEAS

- Librarians value customer privacy, freedom to read, and access to information.
- Librarians select materials for the library based on community interest, current and evolving topics, and recognition for the wide variety of diverse groups within the community.
- Library materials offer a wide range of ideas, views, and opinions. What may be objectionable to one customer may be reasonable and important to another.



# My School Library Is...



## THE BEST SEARCH ENGINE

- School librarians prevent information overload. A single Google search can return billions of results with contradictory information. School librarians are trained professionals who help find the most trustworthy, accurate information. They can also help identify the difference between fake and real news.
- Google isn't always the best source of information—and it's not the only source. School libraries offer books, e-books, journals, DVDs, online databases, and other materials not easily available online. Even if they are available online, they are usually not free except through the library.



- Today's school libraries are more than just books: they are gathering places for all students and faculty to meet, create, investigate, study, tutor, mentor, and learn.

## STAFFED BY INFORMATION EXPERTS

- Studies show that students with regular access to certified school librarians are better prepared to excel in higher education and/or in their career.
- With misinformation and “fake news” so prevalent today, students need to learn how to recognize valid sources of information. Certified school librarians teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills that will help students navigate the information world both in and out of the classroom.
- Employers want to hire people who can collaborate, problem solve, evaluate information, and think critically. Through group activities and the use of shared technology, school librarians foster these skills, necessary for both college and the workplace.
- The school librarian helps foster a love of learning and reading that can last a lifetime.
- Students rely on their school librarian for assistance with classroom assignments, technology help, and other advice.



## CENTRAL TO STUDENT SUCCESS

- Libraries are the heart of the school, serving students, teachers, administrators, and even parents and younger siblings. Everyone is welcome to use the school library with the school librarian as their guide.
- School libraries level the playing field for all students. They provide equal access to resources and technology and lessen the achievement gap between those who have or don't have those resources at home.







# My School Library Is... (continued)

- School librarians are leaders, collaborating with teachers and staff by sharing resources and trends, supporting cross-curricular teaching, and helping to create well-rounded classroom experiences.
- School librarians are trained on copyright issues and basic copyright law, and are valuable assets as schools navigate the correct use of copyrighted material.


## HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE DIGITAL WORLD

- School librarians are technology experts, providing training for both staff and students on the latest tools and trends. 
- School libraries prepare students to become good digital citizens. They help students understand how the internet works, how to use social media platforms responsibly, and how to become informed consumers of knowledge.
- School libraries play a strong role in promoting internet safety for students, as well as for teachers and staff.
- School libraries are a social media hub, not only educating, but providing a safe space for students to troubleshoot with librarians about problems, cyberbullying, and other issues.
- School libraries promote and teach information and technological literacy. They show students how to evaluate information and navigate different resources both in and beyond the classroom.

## AN EXCELLENT INVESTMENT

- Studies show that students with regular access to fully-funded school libraries with certified school librarians have a higher rate of success. 
- Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between student achievement and access to school libraries. Students do much better in situations where there is a larger staff, robust collections, increased library instruction, and an overall larger budget for the library.
- Studies show that students with regular access to a well-developed, fully funded school library have better grades and score higher on student tests.

## A SAFE PLACE FOR IDEAS

- All students have a right to a diverse, well-balanced selection of resources. The school library is the only place that can meet this need. 
- School librarians are trained professionals who select well-balanced materials, representing all points of view on topics.
- School librarians understand censorship issues. They develop policies for material challenges and provide strong support during the challenge process.

# My Special Library Is...



## THE BEST SEARCH ENGINE

- Special librarians prevent information overload. A single Google search can return billions of results with contradictory information. Unlike Google, special librarians know how to quickly use precision searching to find accurate answers.
- Special librarians are trained professionals who can help find the most trustworthy, accurate information. They can also help identify the difference between fake and real news.
- Most of the specialized information special library users are looking for is not available free on the internet. Through paid subscriptions, special libraries provide access to countless sources of credible data, information, and knowledge—far beyond what is discoverable by any internet search engine.



## AN EXCELLENT INVESTMENT

- Well-funded special libraries ensure that special librarians are best positioned to meet all of the information needs of their users, to conduct research, and to provide the most current data and information.
- In many special libraries, subject matter is abundant and collections grow quickly, often getting backlogged. Adequate funding allows users to have full access and optimal use of these materials.



## CENTRAL TO THE ORGANIZATION'S SUCCESS

- The special library is a unique part of the organization, providing research, data, and services that are unavailable elsewhere.
- The special library supports the organization's mission and targets its resources and services to specific needs of both staff and clientele.
- Special libraries are at the forefront of technology, utilizing the latest innovations to keep users informed and up-to-date on their subject matter.



## STAFFED WITH AN INFORMATION EXPERT

- Special librarians have in-depth subject knowledge and know the best sources of information in their organization's area of focus. They can help users navigate all these resources, whether in print or online, traditional or electronic.
- Special librarians offer a wide range of customized information services including competitive intelligence; industry and market research; legal, patent, business and technical research; and more.
- Special librarians rely not only on their own expertise, but can tap into a network of peers for guidance in finding the most accurate answer to a question.

