RAILS My Library Is… Campaign
Report on Year One and Plan for Year Two
July 2020

Introduction/Background

During our 2018 strategic plan revision process, RAILS conducted extensive research on the needs and challenges of RAILS member libraries of all types and sizes. A key component of this research was asking members what in their professional lives "kept them awake at night." An overwhelming concern voiced by staff from all types of RAILS libraries (academic, public, school, and special) was the need for help in promoting the library's value and telling the library story more effectively.

As a direct result of this feedback, RAILS added this goal to our [revised strategic plan](#) (approved by the RAILS Board in September 2018): *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story.* We developed the My Library Is… (MLI) campaign to help achieve this goal. To focus campaign activities, we conducted a member survey in February/March 2019 to find out more about the specific challenges members face in telling their stories/proving their value. We received 380 responses and used this feedback to plan ongoing campaign activities.

The top three challenges identified by all survey respondents were:

- Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer
- Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet
- Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders

RAILS also received a variety of written comments on the survey that showed us we were on the right track in initiating the MLI campaign, including:

- *Thank you so much for listening to our feedback and being proactive to solve the issues we face.*
- *What a great initiative!*
- *Way cool idea. What I've come to expect from RAILS.*
- *Thank you for your continued support of every library!*
- *Thank you for doing this. I am very excited about this project.*
- *The fact that RAILS is interested in helping special libraries is really encouraging*
- *Thank you for contacting us--school libraries appreciate your support!!!*

RAILS also invited additional member feedback throughout the year to ensure that the MLI campaign continued to address the major needs of as many of our member libraries as possible.

Recap of Year One

RAILS planned a number of activities to respond to the needs and challenges identified by all types and sizes of libraries via our February/March 2019 survey, as well as other feedback gathered throughout the year. The following is a summary of those activities and some of the direct impacts on our members (when known):

- Conducted member-wide survey to help focus campaign activities as specified above
- Launched a highly interactive campaign website on July 15, 2020, including general resources and toolkits, specific info for each library type, a training section, a blog, and a Sharing Showcase for libraries to share what has worked for them in telling their stories. (A detailed report on website usage during the first year of the campaign appears at the end of this document.)
- Worked with a marketing firm pro bono to create the *Where Dreams Take Flight* video showing children discovering the library and all it has to offer. Shared the video with Illinois libraries to use on their websites and social media. The video was extremely popular, with approximately 57,000 video views on Facebook. We also received many positive comments as anecdotal evidence of the video's success. The video was shown at several ILA Legislative Meetups and RAILS also won the Association Media & Publishing 2019 EXCEL Award for the video. This award recognizes excellence/leadership in association media and communications.
- Worked with a marketing firm to produce a video starring actor Nick Offerman and showing why libraries are still needed in the age of the internet. This was the second highest challenge identified by all 2019 survey respondents and the number one challenge identified by school libraries. Conducted an extensive social media campaign to highlight the video's debut. (A detailed report on this social media campaign appears at the end of this document.)
- Planned/offered a series of training events in direct response to training needs identified on our 2019 survey. Over 1,000 people registered for 14 events. As possible, webinars were recorded and made available permanently on the MLI campaign website for anyone to view.
- Developed talking points in an easy-to-read infographic format in response to numerous requests from all types of libraries for help knowing what to say when promoting the value of the library. Sought feedback from staff at all library types to develop the talking points. At the time of this writing, the talking points have been "live" on the MLI website for 64 days and have generated 773 pageviews during that time period.
- Heavily featured the campaign at our 2019 AISLE and ILA conference booths. Approximately 169 school library staff visited our AISLE booth and a record number of 592 library staff visited us at ILA. Booth activities included fun ways for visitors to practice telling their library's story.
- Developed/moderated "Telling Our Story: Articulating Library Value across Type" panel discussions at the AISLE and ILA conferences. Approximately 30 school library staff attended the AISLE presentation and over 50 attended at ILA. We heard positive comments from attendees of both programs as anecdotal evidence of their success.
- In direct response to requests for funding assistance on our 2019 survey, changed the focus of RAILS' partnership and CE Event grants programs to focus on funding activities/events to help libraries promote their value. RAILS awarded $25,120 for seven My Library Is… Grant projects involving nine libraries, and eight RAILS CE Event Grants totaling $16,749.
- Met with ILA's Executive Director to discuss ways RAILS and ILA could partner to avoid duplication in planning efforts to help libraries tell their stories. Also met with the ILA marketing committee to discuss possible collaborative efforts.

- Wrote an [article on the campaign](#) for the December 2019 issue of the *ILA Reporter* highlighting successful strategies libraries have used to tell their stories
- Met with AISLE Board members on a regular basis to find out how we could more effectively target school libraries with the MLI campaign and to recruit their help in promoting the campaign to school libraries
- In response to feedback during our strategic plan revision process, partnered with IACRL to host an online roundtable on how academic libraries can articulate their value more effectively. Fifty-two people registered and 30 attended "live."
- Met with representatives from SLA-Illinois to discuss how we might tailor the MLI campaign to meet the specific needs of specialized libraries
- In response to survey feedback, hosted an online roundtable on social media marketing. Thirty-one people registered and 15 attended "live."
- Hosted an online roundtable on managing the marketing process in libraries; 36 people registered and 29 attended live.
- Hosted an online roundtable on using library data for advocacy; 16 people registered and 13 attended live.
- Developed a social media calendar and posted regularly about the MLI campaign to Facebook and Twitter. Implemented social media campaigns to help highlight the campaign and engage members.
- Recruited "library champions" from all types and sizes of libraries to write blog posts and to help us promote the campaign in other ways. Offered "champions training" via Zoom.
- Developed a [video series](#) on how to use the [My Library Is... campaign website](#)

Plans for Year Two of MLI Campaign

RAILS plans to continue many of the activities initiated in the first year of the campaign as specified below. We also plan to take the campaign to a more practical level, by reaching out to all levels of staff at all types of libraries to demonstrate what they can do in their day-to-day lives to promote the value of their library and libraries in general. We will also provide tools/resources to help library staff build relationships with key stakeholders throughout the year, rather than waiting for a crisis to arise to begin their advocacy/promotional efforts, such as threatened building closures, staff layoffs or furloughs, or the elimination of key staff positions.

The following are specific objectives/activities RAILS will work on in FY 2021 to help meet the overarching goal in our strategic plan to work with libraries of all types to tell the library story through the MLI campaign. These plans will continue to develop and grow as we gather additional feedback from RAILS member libraries of all types on specific ways we can help them tell their stories more effectively.

FY 2021 MLI Campaign Objectives	Planned Activities to Achieve Objectives
Ensure that campaign plans and activities are still meeting the primary needs of all types and sizes of RAILS member libraries	Review results of February/March 2019 survey to determine whether there are still major unmet needs not covered by year one MLI campaign activities

FY 2021 MLI Campaign Objectives	Planned Activities to Achieve Objectives
	Conduct follow-up survey to get feedback on FY 2020 activities and to determine what additional activities are needed in FY 2021. Publicize survey results to RAILS members along with proposed plans for meeting new/unmet needs identified in the survey. Conduct survey at the end of FY 2021 to measure knowledge of the MLI campaign by all levels of staff at all types of RAILS libraries, and to determine how successful we were in meeting needs identified at the start of FY 2021
Increase overall awareness of the MLI campaign	Regularly publicize the MLI campaign and MLI website resources via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. Work to double the number of MLI website pageviews from FY 2020 (27,355). Include at least one article in each edition of the weekly *RAILS E-News* to take advantage of the fact that MLI website usage statistics are consistently highest on Wednesdays, the day the *E-News* publishes (see website statistics below). Develop a six-month editorial calendar for MLI articles. Ensure we are highlighting campaign resources that we think might be especially helpful to libraries that may be unaware of, as well as new website resources. Consider developing a special advocacy-related section in the *E-News* for MLI campaign news and other advocacy-related news. Plan social media campaigns to increase awareness of the project. Target campaigns at all levels of staff at all sizes and types of libraries. Highlight MLI campaign at FY 2021 conferences, including at conferences where RAILS is a virtual exhibitor due to COVID-19 Promote the campaign at quarterly RAILS Member Update sessions, and include presentations/ examples from libraries that are effectively promoting their value on a day-to-day basis Highlight recent MLI website blog posts on RAILS homepage to entice people to visit the MLI website Grow the RAILS Marketing email list, both number of subscribers and number of threads. Increase total subscriptions and participation by at least 10% by June 30, 2021.

FY 2021 MLI Campaign Objectives	Planned Activities to Achieve Objectives
	Explore new avenues for bringing news and content about the MLI campaign to member libraries and beyond
Highlight existing tools/resources to help libraries promote their value and provide additional resources to meet needs identified in FY 2021 survey and through other member feedback	Continue to promote the *Elders of the Internet* video to help all types of libraries in Illinois and beyond to demonstrate why libraries are still needed in the internet age. Provide ongoing suggestions for libraries on how they can use the video to promote their programs/services. Offer additional training in response to new needs/ challenges identified on follow-up survey referenced above, as well as training to help all library staff to identify how they can serve as library advocates Widely promote talking points for all types of libraries. Provide guidelines on how staff from all types of libraries can use the talking points effectively. Work with libraries to determine what additional talking points are needed, for example, talking points for specific types of specialized libraries.
Ensure that staff at all levels at all types of member libraries know what they can do to promote the value of their library in their day-to-day working lives. Demonstrate how the MLI website and other campaign activities can help them with these efforts.	Form advisory group or groups with representatives from different staff levels at different types and sizes of libraries. Develop a clear charge for the group(s) that includes: • Helping RAILS promote the campaign to staff with similar positions at the same type/size of library and to staff with similar positions at other libraries • Contributing content and recruiting others to provide content for the MLI website promoting the value of day-to-day library activities and demonstrating that all levels of staff can participate in promoting the library • Providing feedback to ensure that the campaign is meeting the needs of as many staffers at as many RAILS libraries as possible Expand the library stories, talking points, blog, and other sections of the MLI website to include information, best practices, and examples on how staff at all levels at libraries of all types and sizes can promote everyday library activities to help show the value of libraries. Example activities include but are not limited to:

FY 2021 MLI Campaign Objectives	Planned Activities to Achieve Objectives
	• Essential nature of library services during COVID-19 and the crucial role libraries will play in helping their communities recover from the pandemic (job-hunting assistance, etc.) • Value of resource sharing • Library programming/services for all age groups and how libraries can serve as a lifeline for ostracized groups (elderly, teens, etc.) • Services to nonresidents • Library e-initiatives and e-resources • Librarian's role in finding the most authoritative information and dispelling "fake news" Solicit stories, blog posts, and other MLI website content from all levels of staff at all types of RAILS libraries to demonstrate what everyone involved with the library can do to promote its value. Members posted 119 items to the MLI website in FY 2020 (see website statistics report below). We would like that number to increase to at least 500 in FY 2021. • Ensure that we have at least one new blog post per week on the MLI website, either by RAILS or member library staff • Promote the ability for members to contribute blog posts more widely, including finding a way to solicit guest posts via the MLI site. • Solicit more blog posts and stories highlighting examples of practical advocacy-related activities that can be emulated by a number of other libraries of different types and sizes on a day-to-day basis. When recruiting blog posts and stories, provide more examples of possible post topics, so all levels of staff can see more clearly and readily what content they might contribute. Initiate a "day in the life" series on the MLI blog with guest posts from staff at different types of libraries Simplify/revise language on MLI website to more closely reflect library staff members' day-to-day activities. Develop tags/categories to help show all levels of staff how site content can be of use to them.
Continue to partner with other library-related organization to achieve common goals and to avoid	Partner with the Illinois Library Association (ILA) to plan and cross-promote activities/initiatives designed to help libraries promote their value

FY 2021 MLI Campaign Objectives	Planned Activities to Achieve Objectives
duplication of effort wherever possible	• Help promote ILA's *Bigger Than a Building* campaign Partner with the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) to promote the MLI campaign and to plan projects and events to help school libraries promote their value more effectively • Partner with AISLE to target RAILS' [My Library Is… grants](#) at RAILS school libraries Partner with the Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL) to promote the MLI campaign and to plan events to help academic libraries promote their value more effectively Partner with the Special Libraries Association- Illinois chapter (SLA-IL) to promote the MLI campaign and to plan events to help academic libraries promote their value more effectively Explore additional partnerships with other library-related organizations to help spread the word about the MLI campaign

My Library Is… Website Usage
July 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020

RAILS launched the [My Library Is… website](#) on July 15, 2019 in response to member feedback asking for a place to share best practices in telling the library story and to learn from the examples of others. A key feature of the site is the Sharing Showcase, where libraries can post stories, talking points, marketing plans, videos, press releases, social media posts, and more. There is also a blog that features posts from RAILS staff members as well as guest posts from staff at RAILS member libraries.

General MLI Website Statistics, July 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Sessions	13,653
Users	10,072
Pageviews	27,355

Observations:

In general, the day of the week with the highest usage was Wednesday. This is the day the *RAILS E-News* publishes and most issues of the *E-News* for the covered time period featured at least one article on the MLI campaign with a link to the website. This demonstrates the power of the *E-News* in increasing awareness of the campaign, and RAILS will take more focused advantage of this in FY 2021.

Usage of the MLI site dropped off beginning on March 15, 2020, due in large part to the COVID-19 pandemic. RAILS did not publicize the campaign or website in the early days of the pandemic, and staff at our member libraries were either not working or where overwhelmed by pandemic developments. In June, we began promoting the campaign and website resources once again.

Top Ten Pages Viewed on MLI Website, July 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Page Title	Pageviews
MLI website home page	4,895
February Is Library Lovers Month page	3,752
Sidewalk Obstacle Course guest blog post from Illinois Prairie District Public Library	1,893
Library Stories page	1,673
Sharing Showcase page	1,044
Providing Library Senior Services in a COVID-19 World blog post from Saint Charles Public Library District	849
Public Libraries resources page	796
Talking Points from RAILS	773
Videos page in Sharing Showcase	507
Marketing plans page in Sharing Showcase	457

Observations:

Outside of the MLI home page, the most viewed page on the website, unsurprisingly, was the "February is Library Lovers Month" page that RAILS developed to debut the *Elders of the Internet* video starring actor Nick Offerman. The video debuted on February 14 and we had 601 total page views to the website that day. Our highest ever single page view total came on February 19, with 673 page views.

Specific blog posts and library stories featured prominently in the most viewed content beyond the top 10 list. This could be due in part to the fact that RAILS often featured blog posts and/or library stories in our weekly *E-News*, which publishes on Wednesdays. As mentioned above, Wednesdays were most often the day of the week with the highest MLI website usage.

The talking points RAILS developed in response to member feedback debuted on the site on April 27. Despite only being on the site for approximately a little over two months, they still ranked in the top 10 content list.

Member Contributions to MLI Website, July 15, 2019 – June 30, 2020

One of the main reasons RAILS developed the MLI website was to give libraries the opportunity to share best practices in telling their stories via a variety of different communication tools. The following is a breakdown of items shared by libraries to the Sharing Showcase section and to the blog.

Item Category	Number of Items Shared in This Category
Videos	38
Library Stories	25
Printables (rack cards, brochures, flyers, etc.)	19
Guest Blog Posts	18
Style Guides	7
Marketing Plans	7
Library Displays	4
Talking Points	1
Total # Items Contributed	119

Observations:

We are disappointed with the low number of items posted to the MLI website in the first year of the campaign, and would like to see that number grow exponentially in FY 2021. Reasons for the low number may include: not enough awareness of the MLI website or the ability for any library staff member to post items, libraries not knowing what kind of items they can post to the site, or libraries not thinking that their items are "good enough" to post.

RAILS hopes that our FY 2021 MLI campaign goal to show all levels of library staff at all types and sizes of libraries that everyone can be an advocate for the library via their day-to-day activities, will result in an increase in the number of items posted to the MLI website.

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, 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.