

24 August 2020

**TO: RAILS Board of Directors**

**FROM: Deirdre Brennan**

**SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – August, 2020**

**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 and RAILS**

Here is a [link](#) to the Re-opening Survey of RAILS member libraries on our webpage. Monica and Grant will be discussing the latest news and data reporting at the meeting.

#### **Quarantine and Delivery**

We have decided to extend our quarantine requirements for materials going through RAILS delivery from 3 days to 7 days. We will send out a communication to directors and post it on our Pulse page on Tuesday or Wednesday of this week. I will forward it to the board when it goes out and it will be in e-News.

In early September, we expect to see the results of the REALM Test 4, which is essentially a redo of Test 1, in stacked configuration.

#### **Census 2020**

The final date for Census form completion is now officially September 30. It had been moved to October 31. Needless to say, this project has been fraught with challenges. Amy de la Fuente has been truly amazing as she has juggled the subrecipients changing plans and IDHS changing requirements. Despite it all, Illinois ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in completion rates for the Census, which is remarkable considering. Amy will be presenting a report to the board at the October meeting.

#### **Hull House exhibit and partnership**

We have embarked on a new, interesting partnership with Hull House, the Jane Addams Museum, and 4 member libraries – Arlington Heights, Aurora Public Library, Gail Borden Library District and Schaumburg Township District Library. In honor of the centennial of women's suffrage, Hull House

and the library partners have put together a virtual exhibit that we will be able to share virtually with our member libraries. This exhibit should launch this week; when I does I will forward a link. I think this is an exciting development for our museum/cultural attractions program and partnership with libraries.

### **The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act**

The Illinois State Library will receive approximately \$1.1 million from the Cares Act to distribute to libraries across Illinois. They have a variety of plans for this funding, including grants to the 3 library systems to enable purchasing of additional e-books. I have attached the letter from Karen Egan which outlines the scope of the grant. This is excellent news! We plan to focus on materials for students in light of the crisis that schools – K-12 and colleges and universities – are facing, as they try to support remote learning. This will be an important educational role for all libraries.

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

### **Podcast**

I was honored to do a podcast last week with staff from three of our member libraries – Evanston, St. Charles and Skokie – about their efforts to build equitable, diverse and inclusive libraries and library services. This was our first Zoom-based podcast, which I did from a barn in Maine, while sitting on the floor. Anything is possible with Zoom! It was a great session, but we were really only able to scratch the surface of this important topic. We all agreed to regroup for Part 2 in a few months.

**Help libraries be the best they can be**

### **REALM – Reopening Archives, Libraries and Museums**

I continue to attend meetings of the REALM (Reopening Archives, Libraries and Museums) steering committee and operations group. I recommend that you visit the [website](#) to see the latest news and sign up for email updates.

### **RAILS Minute**

I did take a two-week vacation from “RAILS Minute” but Dan and I will be back at it this week. These are literally one-minute conversations about what’s new at RAILS. They are posted on social media and seem very popular as a quick way to stay up-to-date with RAILS.

### **L2R launching**

Training has begun for the new L2R! The first week went very smoothly – kudos to the staff, especially Brian Smith and Anne Slaughter. Anne will be providing a full report on L2R at the September board meeting.

## **Prepare libraries for the future**

### **RAILS, social justice and EDI**

Included in your packet is a draft charge for the RAILS Board EDI committee. I look forward to discussing this with you at the meeting. I will also update you on what is happening at RAILS with this initiative.

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

### **Virtual RAILS Staff Day**

Planning is underway for a virtual staff day this year. Instead of a single day, we anticipate providing various opportunities for staff to connect with each for training and fun events. Joe Filapek and his team are leading a group of volunteers in the planning.



## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

JESSE WHITE • Secretary of State

**Illinois State Library**  
300 S. Second Street  
Springfield, IL 62701-1796

August 12, 2020

Ms. Deirdre Brennan  
Reaching Across Illinois Library System  
Burr Ridge Service Center  
125 Tower Drive  
Burr Ridge, IL 60527-5783

Dear Deirdre,

This is a follow up to your initial discussion with Greg McCormick regarding a grant opportunity to support the purchase of E-books. Reaching Across Illinois Library System is invited to apply for \$100,000 - \$125,000 specifically for the purchase of E-books to support the needs of your member libraries and the patrons they serve.

Please submit a [grant application](#) prior to September 30, 2020. Attach the application to an email addressed to [isl\\_grants@ilsos.gov](mailto:isl_grants@ilsos.gov) (note the underscore between isl\_grants).

The grant award will be paid as a reimbursement. Your agency is required to first appropriately disburse local funds per the approved application then submit documentation to receive reimbursement. Release of award funds will be authorized after the submission of reports documenting proof of expenditure.

Activities are expected to start about November 1, 2020, with all purchases made by September 30, 2021.

The State Library will be funding this effort, in part, using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant funds to expand digital network access which includes digital inclusion. CARES Act funding is provided to the Illinois State Library from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and is an extension of the Library Services and Technology Act program.

- Federal Award Identification Number: LS-246531-OLS-20.
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.310 State Library Program.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Egan".

Karen Egan, Associate Director

Cc: Greg McCormick

## This Month at RAILS – August 2020

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

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

##### **ICOLC Meeting Covers Wide Range of Resource Sharing Issues**

ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) held a virtual meeting on July 20-22. (These meetings are usually held in person twice each year.) Staff from library cooperatives and consortia located throughout the world discussed a number of interesting topics including accessibility, vendor agreements and negotiations, and OCLC relationships. Various RAILS staff members participated in the sessions.

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

##### **eRead Illinois Update**

Interest in [eRead Illinois](#) has increased markedly, especially from school libraries as districts make the decision to go back to school, do remote learning, or a hybrid of the two. Between July 1 and August 15, we added 18 eRead Illinois members - 17 school districts and one academic library.

Two webinars are planned for late August about RAILS's e-content programs for schools. One is an overview of eRead Illinois and the BiblioBoard Library. The other is a demonstration of the integration between the eRead Illinois Axis 360 platform and Follett's Destiny ILS, which is used by a large number of schools in the RAILS service area.

##### **BiblioBoard Update**

An additional 50 e-books were added to the Illinois Census 2020 Collection on [BiblioBoard](#). The titles are from the Lawrence Hill Imprint and include quality nonfiction e-books on civil and human rights, feminism, and topics of interest to African Americans and other underrepresented groups.

Libraries can now check BiblioBoard usage stats from their community via our [reporting dashboard](#) on the BiblioBoard page on the RAILS website.

The new Recovering the Classics cover images are now available via the [BiblioBoard page](#) on the RAILS website for libraries to download. Libraries are free to use these images for their own marketing, promotional, and programming purposes.

### PrairieCat's PUG Days Series Features RAILS E-Resources

PrairieCat, one of six [RAILS-supported online catalog consortia](#), is hosting a [PUG Days](#) webinar series in August and September to replace their traditional in-person annual event. As part of this series, on Tuesday, September 1, at 10 a.m., the RAILS Resource Sharing Team (Leila Heath, Anna Behm, and Jessica Barnes) will share what's new with our different e-resources programs, including the [BiblioBoard Library](#), [inkie.org](#), [eRead Illinois](#), and the [Explore More Illinois](#) cultural pass program.

### RAILS Online Roundtable: E-Content Options for Schools

On August 27, RAILS held an online roundtable on E-Content Options for Schools. Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, provided an overview of the [eRead Illinois](#) program including information about the collection, scoping options for schools, fee structure, and how to sign up. She also discussed the RAILS for Schools BiblioBoard Library site (available on the [BiblioBoard page](#) on the RAILS website).

### Explore More Illinois Update

Although [Explore More Illinois](#) is still suspended, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) members began joining the program in July. RAILS and IHLS staff also had a productive meeting where we discussed how we can collaborate on marketing to libraries and attractions throughout the state of Illinois. We also continued adding RAILS member libraries to Explore More Illinois this month. Currently, 265 RAILS libraries have joined.



### Zoom Discussions with STBF Winning Authors

Over the past few months, the [Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project](#) (STBF) committee has held several discussions with winning indie authors from the STBF and STBF Manuscript contests. Several talks focused on the pandemic and other conflicts in our time, and how they affect writers and their work. RAILS and/or the STBF team often include information about free tools available to support Illinois writers, such as [inkie.org](#).

The most recent conversation was held on August 21 with STBF winners Joanne Zienty and Daniel Rosenberg. All events are shared live on RAILS' and STBF's Facebook pages. They are also available on the [Soon to Be Famous blog page](#).



## Improving Physical Delivery Services

### REALM Project and RAILS Delivery

The [REALM](#) (Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums) Project is investigating how long the COVID-19 virus survives on materials prevalent in libraries, archives, and museums. Deirdre Brennan is on the project steering committee and RAILS monitors project [research/results](#) carefully when making decisions on the amount of time (currently three days) libraries should quarantine materials before sending them through RAILS Delivery.

REALM Test 2 results on braille paper pages, glossy paper pages, magazine pages, children's board books, and archival folders were announced in July. Test 3 results on talking book cassette cartridges, DVDs, flexible plastic storage bags, rigid plastic storage containers, and plexiglass were announced in August.

## Providing Greater Purchasing Power

### Career Online High School (COHS) Update

RAILS continues to streamline the [Career Online High School](#) program, which gives adults the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. Eighteen RAILS libraries currently participate. RAILS subsidizes the cost of the platform for all libraries in the state. The platform includes extensive training for participating staff, implementation, and student recruitment support.

Streamlining measures include a revised online assessment form, new email response templates for potential students, and updating the procedure manual. Gale, the COHS vendor, has agreed to smaller bundles of scholarship purchases for new libraries and those replenishing their scholarships. In conjunction with Gale, we are planning more informational webinars this fall, as well as an online meeting with participating libraries to learn about best practices.

### Deals and Discounts Update

RAILS is currently working on adjusting deal parameters with our current vendors, such as Swank and Career Online High School, as well as exploring potential discounts on new resources, including e-learning platforms and Zoom. Stay tuned for upcoming details!

## Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

### RAILS to Host Online Roundtable on Passport Services

Libraries interested in learning how to become a passport approval agency are invited to a [RAILS roundtable](#) on Wednesday, September 9, from 10 – 11 a.m. This event will feature a brief presentation by Kim Murphy, Head of Adult Services, Prospect Heights Public Library.

## Telling the Library Story

### Helping Members Tell Their Story



#### New Additions to My Library Is... Blog

The [My Library Is... Blog](#) gives libraries an opportunity to share what they are doing to show their value to their community of users. Any topic related to spreading the word about the value of the library is fair game, including innovative programs/events, relationships/partnerships, effective promotional techniques, and more.

Recent posts include:

- A [guest post](#) from Emily Hampston, Head of Adult Programs at Palos Park Public Library, about the library's efforts to build a sense of community during the pandemic, including offering low-tech programs and activities designed to get people away from their computer/smartphone screens for a while.
- A [guest post](#) from Tana Petrov, Outreach Services Manager at Fountaindale Public Library District, about her team's transition to "virtual outreach" to provide interactive, fun, and memorable experiences for the library community while still maintaining social distancing.
- A [guest post](#) from Donna Forbis, Marketing & Events Coordinator at Illinois Prairie District Public Library, about the library's creation of a virtual escape room/educational quiz featuring [Norbert the bearded dragon](#) finding the correct information to complete his census form.

#### My Library Is... Blog Post among Top Ten Most Viewed Pages in 2020

On Wednesday, July 29, RAILS published a new My Library Is... blog post, "[The Virtual Life of Outreach](#) or How to Remain Relevant in the Time of Social Distancing" by Tana Petrov from Fountaindale Public Library. That day, the blog post received over 370 views. Within a week, the post had nearly 700 views! One reason we think that this post proved to be so popular, in addition to the highly relevant subject matter, was that RAILS cross-promoted it via our Outreach mailing list.

In 2020, as the table below indicates, this blog post (in red) has the eighth highest number of views thus far, despite only being active for approximately two weeks.



### ***Top Ten Highest Number of Pageviews on My Library Is... Website in 2020***

<b>Page Title</b>	<b>Pageviews</b>
February Is Library Lovers Month   My Library Is ...	3,752
Home   My Library Is ...	2,907
Sidewalk Obstacle Course   My Library Is ...	2,113
Your Library Stories   My Library Is ...	916
Providing Library Senior Services in a COVID-19 World   My Library Is ...	865
Talking Points from RAILS   My Library Is ...	810
Blog   My Library Is ...	709
<b>The Virtual Life of Outreach or How to Remain Relevant in the Time of Social Distancing   My Library Is ...</b>	<b>709</b>
Illinois Prairie District Public Library - Video   My Library Is ...	503
Public Libraries   My Library Is ...	413

#### **My Library Is... Campaign a Featured Topic of PUG Days Webinar Series**

As part of PrairieCat's [PUG Days](#) webinar series (see above), Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, will present "[The Marketing Funnel & the My Library Is... Campaign](#)," on Thursday, September 3, at 10 a.m. The session will explore how to create better coordinated, more effective marketing efforts that open up a brand new conversation about the role of the library.

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

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

##### **"What Is Cataloging Ethics?" Webinar**

On Tuesday, September 22, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m., Dr. Karen Snow from Dominican University will provide scholarly context and practical case studies to illustrate ethical issues in cataloging to demonstrate why it is critical for catalogers to view their work through an ethical lens.

[Register via Zoom.](#)

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

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

##### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiatives**

##### **New Sparks Podcast on EDI**

The 28<sup>th</sup> episode of our [Sparks podcast](#) (and the first since the pandemic hit) features interviews via Zoom with three RAILS member library staff on their libraries' EDI activities, and how other libraries can get started with their own EDI initiatives, even if they don't have a lot of resources.



Pictured clockwise from upper left: Deirdre Brennan; Teri Campbell, Assistant Director, Evanston Public Library; Emily Conratt, Preschool Outreach Librarian, St. Charles Public Library District; and Nancy Kim Phillips, Community Engagement Manager, Skokie Public Library

The podcast is available as an audio-only or video file. Both are available on the [RAILS website](#). RAILS Board members can subscribe to *Sparks* to automatically download this and future episodes to your smartphone or other mobile device, or visit [railslibraries.info/sparks](https://railslibraries.info/sparks) to listen via your computer/laptop.

### **New EDI Pulse Page**

RAILS has a section on our [home page](#) called “The Library Pulse,” to help libraries of all types and sizes stay current on the latest issues/challenges affecting them.

We recently added an [EDI Pulse Page](#). In addition to sharing the most current information about RAILS and other EDI initiatives, events, and continuing education offerings, we are asking members to [submit information](#) on their EDI activities by completing the survey form in the Library Examples section. [Survey results](#) are also viewable. As with our other pulse pages, we will continually update the EDI page and add new information as appropriate.

### **“Reducing Unconscious Bias in the Library” Interactive Virtual Program**

RAILS is offering our members a [two-part online workshop](#) with diversity consultant Catherine Popowits on September 3 and 10, from 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. each day. Participants need to register for both sessions. They will learn to consciously include others to build trust and community. Each session will be highly interactive, practical, and provide a safe space for dialogue. Registration is already full for this program.

### **RAILS EDI Staff Initiative Moves Forward**

RAILS continues to work on our internal initiative to teach staff EDI principles and to help eliminate unconscious bias. We are working with Elisabeth “Biz” Lindsay-Ryan, a diversity and inclusion professor, trainer and consultant based in Evanston. Biz recently participated in a staff meeting to talk about the work she will be doing with us and answer questions.

We are currently seeking staff volunteers to serve on our workplace climate team. This team of 8 – 10 staff will meet monthly and will work with Biz to build organizational capacity to recognize and solve problems related to EDI. We will also schedule two all-staff training sessions with Biz. Each will be offered twice at different times of day to accommodate the varied schedules of our delivery staff.

## Helping Libraries Respond to COVID-19

### "COVID-19: Employer Q&A" Webinar

Two attorneys from HR Source will present a Zoom webinar on Monday, August 31, from 1:00–2:15 p.m., to discuss how employers can best handle the myriad of issues around COVID-19 while keeping their staff and workplaces safe. The webinar is a modified version of the May HR Source webinar with updated information. It will also include answers to many of the questions asked during the July 23 RAILS member update. [Register on Zoom](#).

## Helping the Unserved/Underserved

### Helping Students Get Access to Libraries

On August 5, RAILS offered the webinar “Every Student Gets a Card: Leveraging IGAs to Grant Library Access to Illinois Students.” This webinar featured two staff members from Roselle Public Library who spoke about their experience working with their school district to establish an intergovernmental agreement (IGA). Their IGA resulted in a number of students in unserved areas receiving library cards. Several participants said that they would like to pursue a similar IGA as a result of attending this webinar. The recording is available in the [RAILS CE Archives](#).

## Aiming to Be the Best Library System

## Member Communication/Engagement

### RAILS Invites School Libraries to Online RAILS Refresher

August is traditionally the time for school to start and with new complications in 2020, RAILS is inviting school librarians to connect one-on-one to find out more about RAILS resources. The meetings will take place on Zoom and will cover continuing education, deals & discounts, delivery service and interlibrary loan, grants, networking/connections, and e-books/e-content.

As of the time of this writing (August 19), 10 libraries have requested meetings and school librarians can continue to [request a “refresher”](#) well into November.

### RAILS July 23 Member Update Recording Available

Over 400 people attended the July 23 RAILS Member Update to hear the latest news about the [REALM Project](#) from Sharon Streams, Project Director/OCLC; how to develop policies and procedures for library staff testing positive for COVID-19 from HR Source; and an update on the Cards for Kids Act from Joe Natale at the Illinois State Library. RAILS staff gave the latest news about our EDI initiatives, census grant, the “new L2,” delivery, and more.

A [recording of the session](#) is available on the RAILS YouTube page.