RAILS
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

8 January 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – September, 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**

REALM project

The REALM steering committee has had a couple of very good conversations about the next phase of the project. We are particularly focused on what will most help libraries, museums and archives in the coming months, and agree that one important component should be assistance with vaccine education and distribution. Libraries are the most trusted governmental agencies and one of our key roles has always been providing authoritative information and helping our communities understand complex issues. I have heard from some member library directors that they are very interested in being locations for vaccination and want to be pro-active in combating misinformation about vaccine safety.

REALM meetings have been paused over the holidays, but will recommence next week.

Networking meetings

Two of our strategic plan objectives under our resource sharing goal focus on providing networking and collaboration opportunities for member libraries and staff. Since RAILS's inception, we have encouraged and supported local networking groups, through CE grants and by meeting with them to gain deeper understanding of their needs and the huge variety of needs across RAILS. The pandemic obviously had a huge negative effect on the ability of these groups to meet, and on our ability to meet with them and to visit local libraries in person.

We started providing Zoom access for these groups last year, even before the pandemic, because it improved their ability to meet and collaborate, and during the pandemic it has become even more important in enabling them to meet and share virtually. Recently, Monica and I have started attending their virtual meetings and it has been enormously rewarding as we have been able to learn firsthand how they are doing, what their challenges are, and to understand the amazing

work they are doing for their communities in these trying times. We are putting a process in place to capture these stories and information as it shows very clearly how important libraries are to communities during the pandemic. Below are notes from the Tri-County Directors Meeting that I think you will find very revealing. Some of the things we have learned:

Tri-County Directors Meeting Notes

Attending: Cathy Grafton (Odell), Mary Fisher-Miller (Chatsworth), Jason Shirley (Towanda), Linda Zimmerman (Gridley Public), Joyce (Martin Township Public Library), Jennie Losey (Hudson Area PL), Sherrie Rhodes (Prairie Creek PL), Ann Reyes

Jennie Losey – Hudson Area Public Library
- Open to the public since July 1st
- Seen circulation growth of 15% over last year
- People are coming in less frequently, but when they do they stock up and check out more
- The library has 977 cardholders and 955 have used their library card in the last six months
- E-Resources have also seen some growth

Sherrie Rhodes – Prairie Creek Public Library (Dwight, IL)
- Opened recently for faxing because it was a big request coming from patrons who would otherwise have to drive a large distance.
- They make appointments for the public to use computers and do faxing which is an important service to the community

General observations:
- Online programming (other than storytime) isn't really working in their small communities, but they sometimes direct patrons to the online programming that more resourced libraries are doing and its helpful.
- Some programming that has been popular are take home crafts and binge boxes of pre-selected materials.
- Trying to find more ways to promote books for patrons who are not browsing the shelves
- There is a challenge in trying to remain positive for the staff and patrons in the face of so much
- When staff members test positive, often the whole library has to quarantine because there are so few working.
- A few shut down evening hours because there wasn't much activity
- Most patrons have been very cooperative with their rules for masks and distancing
- Use of eRead Axis 360 tripled in their community
- 15 minute appointments for seniors to use the library has been a lifeline for many of them, who are feeling increasingly isolated

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Help needed promoting My Library Is… campaign

Our service of the month report this month is for the My Library Is.. campaign. This campaign is even more important during the pandemic; we need board members' help in promoting this campaign.

Meetings with AISLE, IHLS and ILA

Two of the objectives under Goal 2 of our strategic plan focus on working with member libraries and other stakeholder organizations to advocate for libraries in Illinois. As you know, RAILS has regular meetings with AISLE and IHLS in order to better understand and serve our school library members and to assist AISLE in their efforts. We also work closely with ILA on many advocacy and public policy issues. We have had a couple of very productive meetings with these organizations during the past couple of months.

Monica, Mary and I met with representatives of ILA and IHLS on December 4 to discuss collaboration efforts and areas where we overlap and how to avoid duplication of efforts. ILA includes many members from both RAILS and IHLS; we certainly want to try and make the best possible use of our resources. For example, we all provide CE and we are all working on EDI initiatives. How can we share knowledge and resources to have greater impact? ILA needs advocacy stories that systems are often better able to provide because we have closer contact with our members and greater knowledge of their needs and situations. It was a very good meeting. ILA will be attending our monthly meetings with IHLS and AISLE, and they have shared with us a survey they did last year of member EDI needs that will be very helpful in guiding our EDI work.

Just a few days ago, we had our monthly AISLE meeting with IHLS and ILA; we discussed collaborative programming for school libraries in March to provide awareness of our e-resources grants, the state of school libraries in Illinois, the upcoming ILA meetups and advocacy for library trustees.

On that front, there will be a networking meeting on January 20 for trustees. Thanks to Tom Stagg for his leadership on this issue.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Certification

Every year, all members of the library systems in Illinois are required to complete a certification process. Certification was suspended last year because of the pandemic. This year, there are changes to the process that we think will be very beneficial to members.

- Certification will be done on L2, not on a separate platform with separate login. This was a change requested by libraries.
- The timeline is different this year to accommodate additional development of L2. It will begin on February 15 and end on May 15.
- Certification for RAILS members will include additional questions for public libraries **only** that were developed as part of our standards work. These questions are about collection expenditures, hours open and educational level of the director.

These additional questions will add to our understanding of our member libraries and help us serve them better. The State Library has also expanded their per capita grant application this year to provide more complete information about public libraries.

These questions are informational only! There will be no impact on system membership.

Prepare libraries for the future

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

On December 2 had our first meeting of the RAILS Board Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. We used our first meeting to get acquainted and heard from all attendees about what they hope the committee can accomplish. Our next meeting is in February.

Universal Service

We held a member update on December 8 and focused pretty exclusively on the revised administrative rules released by the State Library. These updated administrative rules provide guidance on the 2020 Cards for Kids Act, E-Resources for non-residents, and non-resident service to disabled veterans. Greg McCormick and his staff attended the update and answered many questions.

These additions to the administrative rules can be found on page 18660 of the Illinois Register. RAILS members may send any comments to Joe Natale, Chief Deputy Director of the Illinois State Library, at jnatale@ilsos.gov. Feedback may also be mailed to the Gwendolyn Brooks Building – Room 521, 300 South Second, Springfield, IL 62701. The comment period will run through January 15, 2021.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Board engagement

We have an agenda item at the board meeting for a discussion of board engagement and expectations. This arose from a meeting of our Climate Team where we talked about the board as part of the overall discussion of the RAILS culture. Biz Lindsay, our consultant, encouraged us to discuss engagement and expectations with the board, specifically does the experience of being on the board match the expectations when board members were first elected.

As you know, RAILS staff want to do everything we can do make the board experience positive, rewarding and informative. I hope that we can discuss this topic as well as others related to board engagement and expectations including does the board member job description match what the board does; how can we do a better job of educating the board; how can we engage with each other more effectively, especially during the pandemic?

This Month at RAILS – December 2020/January 2021

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

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

New Vendor Privacy Policies Page on RAILS Website

RAILS worked with member library staff to develop a Vendor Privacy Policies page, in response to feedback from the ESLUM (Electronic Subscription Managers) Networking Group. It contains links to privacy policies for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries.

We encourage all RAILS public libraries to add their library's vendor/e-resource information to make this tool as comprehensive and useful as possible. Based on member feedback, we may expand the project to include academic, school, and specialized libraries in 2022.

E-book Grant Update

As reported in November, RAILS received a $125,000 grant from the Illinois State Library to purchase e-books of interest to K-12 students for eRead Illinois. Initial orders totaling $23,000 (900 items) were placed in December. We worked with Baker & Taylor, our eRead Illinois vendor, to identify the top circulating youth and young adult materials not included in eRead Illinois, and added those items to the collection. Grant purchasing will continue on a monthly basis through May 2021.

Interest in e-books and audiobooks has increased sharply during the pandemic, and has resulted in an influx of new libraries joining eRead Illinois. Over 70 schools have joined since mid-April 2020. Public libraries also face the challenge of providing educational and recreational e-resources for students not able to access materials in the library and those spending a lot more time at home. This grant will help us meet these very important needs.

BiblioBoard Update

While we have not seen the same usage spike in BiblioBoard that we have seen with eRead Illinois, unique BiblioBoard content performed especially well in 2020. The top five most viewed items included a title from the RAILS for Schools site, the 2019 Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project winning title (*The Bone Shroud*), a local community collection title from Brookfield Public Library, and a title from the Recovering the Classics collection.

We are looking forward to exploring new programs and awareness campaigns, including a series of webinars, with BiblioLabs, our BiblioBoard vendor, in 2021.

Spreading the Word about E-Resources Available Free through RAILS

RAILS sent a press release to media contacts statewide to publicize the availability of BiblioBoard resources to everyone in Illinois, without needing a login or library card. Thousands of e-resources are available free of charge through our partnership with BiblioLabs.

We also shared a template of the release with members so they could customize it for their patrons. The template is available via the [BiblioBoard page](#) of our website.

Resource Sharing Team Activities
The RAILS Resource Sharing Team had several opportunities to educate libraries about RAILS e-resource sharing programs/services in December, including:

- Attending the ELSUM Networking Group meeting to give overviews of the Vendor Privacy Policy Project (see above), BiblioBoard Library, and inkie.org, and to discuss digital magazine pricing issues. We received valuable feedback which will help shape our efforts to gain more participation in BiblioBoard Library/inkie.org in 2021.
- Conducting the E-Content Networking meeting. About 40 members attended to discuss digital magazine pricing issues, the e-book grant, BiblioBoard Library, and other issues. Attendees also got a preview of the Vendor Privacy Policy Page.
- Presenting information about the e-book grant and the Vendor Privacy Policy Project at the [RAILS Resource Sharing Committee](#) Meeting.

Explore More Illinois Update

Although the [Explore More Illinois](#) cultural pass program is still suspended due to the pandemic, RAILS continues to add libraries and develop procedures/plans for the relaunch when restrictions are lifted. Currently, 323 libraries (282 RAILS, 41 IHLS) participate.

We are also working on a 2021 Explore More Illinois marketing/penetration plan, and planning for an early 2021 national networking meeting with other Quipu ePass users (the software used for Explore More) to discuss how they are handling their museum pass programs during the pandemic.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

RAILS Continues to Explore the Future of Delivery
Greg Pronevitz, the consultant RAILS has been working with to help us plan for the future of delivery, recently completed phase two of his work. This past spring, RAILS released an RFI seeking information from vendors across the country on potential efficient and cost-effective delivery strategies. Greg presented the findings and conclusions from this work to the RAILS [Resource Sharing Committee](#) on December 14 and the [Consortia Committee](#) on January 11. We are currently exploring next steps.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

Public Web Browser Available Free to All Types of Libraries through RAILS

Public Web Browser (PWB) allows libraries to lock down the web browser on computers and customize workstations for specific uses (e.g., a dedicated catalog computer). As a benefit of membership, all RAILS libraries have access to PWB free of charge for in-library use only. RAILS conducted the renewal for PWB in December. The new contract was extended for an additional five months due to the pandemic.

Gale Career Online High School (COHS) Program Update
COHS is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program that enables libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas along with career certificates in one of 10 high-demand employment fields.

RAILS scheduled our first COHS networking group meeting for January 2021. We are also working on a 2021 COHS marketing plan.

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Visit the Deals & Discounts page on the RAILS website for information about all of RAILS offers.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

Special RAILS Online Roundtable for Library Trustees
On Wednesday, January 20, noon – 1 p.m., RAILS will host an online roundtable designed specifically for library trustees. The event will include two short presentations:

- Alex Todd, Library Director, Prospect Heights Public Library District, will discuss budgetary best practices during the pandemic.
- Joe Filapek, Trustee, Aurora Public Library District, will discuss the importance of trustee onboarding and some ideas for building a trustee onboarding process.

There will also be time for discussion and a Q&A. All staff and public library trustees from RAILS member libraries are invited. This event will be recorded. We ask RAILS Board members to help us spread the word about this roundtable to other trustees in the RAILS area.

Upcoming RAILS Online Roundtables
In addition to the trustee event, RAILS will host two additional roundtables in late January and early February. Both will be recorded and posted on the RAILS website.

"DEI Programming during a Pandemic," Tuesday, January 26, 10 – 11 a.m.
Will include a short presentation from Courtney Tedrick, Head of Community Engagement, Wheaton Public Library. There will also be a discussion/Q&A and time for other libraries to talk about their own approaches to equity, diversity, and inclusion programming.

"[Promoting New Titles Virtually for Schools](#)," Tuesday, February 2, 4 – 5 p.m.
Will include a short presentation by Patti Fleser, Library Media Specialist, Deer Path Middle School, about virtual methods for promoting physical books, including using videos and Bitmojis.

Virtual Visits to RAILS Networking Groups

We recently began [visiting virtual meetings](#) of RAILS networking groups to engage members and to learn more about their current issues and concerns and how RAILS might help them. We are contacting all of the networking groups we are aware of and offering to attend an upcoming meeting.

RAILS Executive Deirdre Brennan, RAILS Associate Executive Director Monica Harris, and RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom are each making visits so we can reach as many groups as possible. As of this writing, they have attended approximately 10 meetings and several more visits are scheduled. We've received a very favorable reaction from the groups contacted/visited thus far.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story

Interest in RAILS My Library Is… Grant for School Libraries

RAILS is targeting our latest round of [My Library Is… grants](#) at school libraries to help them promote their value and tell their stories in a more impactful way. We are offering up to ten $1,000 grants with an application deadline of January 15.

On December 16, we held a special online roundtable to discuss the grant application process. This event was recorded and is now available on the [RAILS YouTube page](#). Approximately six school library staff members participated "live," and as of this writing, 40 have viewed the recording.

Enhancements to My Library Is… Blog

RAILS recently made several enhancements to our [My Library Is… Blog](#), including combining blogs and stories on one page, adding tags, and providing a search bar to make it easier to find posts on specific topics, for specific types of libraries, etc. For example, entering "COVID" in the search bar returns two pages of items about what libraries are doing to show their value during the pandemic. Adding a tag, such as "advocacy" or "academic libraries" narrows the search.

The blog is the most popular section of the My Library is… site, and we encourage library staff at all types and sizes of libraries to contribute blog posts about successful methods they have used to promote their library, patron success stories and testimonials, and more. Interested bloggers can contact communications@railslibraries.info.

My Library Is… Advisory Team Update
RAILS has an 11-member advisory group representing all types of libraries to help us with our My Library Is… campaign. The group met on January 6 to discuss next steps for several projects they have planned.

The group has also been busy blogging. Advisory team blog posts include:

- Library Advocacy: A Resolution for Us All by Victoria Blackmer, Assistant Director at Robert J. Jones Public Library District, about five easy ways anyone can become a library advocate.
- My First Year as a School Librarian by Jessica Parker, Library Media Specialist at Kaneland High School, about how her many efforts to find out what students and teachers wanted from the library paid off.
- Fine Free at Oregon Public Library by Hilaree Lombardo, Library Director at Oregon Public Library District, about the library's efforts to go fine free and how this helped improve the community's perception of the library.
- The Birth of a Library Service by Kirstin Finneran, Public Relations & Outreach Manager at Fox River Valley Public Library District, on the creation of a home delivery service during the pandemic for the 7th largest library district in Illinois, with limited funding, one van, and a very determined staff.
- The Festive Readers' Advisory We Need Now: Teen and Adult Book Boxes by Gail Graziani, Assistant Director of Adult Services at Lisle District Library, detailing the steps involved in creating a book box program for adults as a follow-up to the library's very successful teen program.
- SRP Already? Lessons from the Pandemic by Donna Forbis, Marketing & Events Coordinator at Illinois Prairie District Public Library, about her library's impromtu changes in rethinking their 2020 Summer Reading Program mid-pandemic, and how the lessons learned are already helping the library to plan their 2021 program.

New My Library Is… Blog Posts
In addition to the blog posts by My Library Is… Advisory Team members mentioned above, other recent posts to the My Library Is… blog include:

- A guest post from Nicole Steeves, Library Director at Fox River Grove Public Library, about the creation of two videos to promote the library and the community. The library used funds from a RAILS My Library Is… grant to create the videos.

- A guest post from Jimmy Gonzalez-Vicker, Experiential Learning Lead at Skokie Public Library, about the important role makerspaces can play during the pandemic and how libraries can operate them safely.

Advocating for Libraries

AISLE/RAILS/IHLS/ILA Meet to Help Support School Libraries

On December 1 and January 5, RAILS staff met with colleagues from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) and the Illinois Heartland Library System. We were pleased to welcome representatives from the Illinois Library Association at our January meeting, and they will be joining us at future meetings as well.

Discussions focused on system e-resources for school libraries and how AISLE could help promote these resources, including planning a future AISLE event for school libraries; the e-book grant; building college-ready skills through high school library programs; My Library Is… grants for schools; and a general update on the state of school libraries in Illinois. We will continue to meet monthly in 2021.

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

Open Meetings Act Webinar a Hit with Members

RAILS' final webinar of 2020 was one of the better attended webinars of the year. Julie Tappendorf from Ancel Glink presented an updated version of "Compliance with the Open Meetings Act." It covered the basics of OMA as well as recent amendments due to the pandemic. Over 250 RAILS members attended. The recording and associated resources are available on the RAILS CE Archives page.

Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights

Upcoming CE events include webinars on virtual program assessment (January 14), libraries and unions (February 4), a panel discussion on physical and virtual Grab & Go/Take & Make/DIY Kits (February 8), and Libraries & Technology in the Post-Pandemic Landscape (February 18). RAILS Board members are welcome to attend these sessions. Visit L2 for more information/ registration.

Developing Library Leaders

Planning Begins for 2021 Elevate Library Leadership Conference

RAILS is having preliminary conversations with ILA and other planning committee members to offer the Elevate Library Leadership Conference in 2021. This annual event was originally scheduled for April 2020 in Springfield, but was cancelled due to the pandemic. We are looking at a virtual event offered at the end of April 2021, keeping the planned 2020 theme: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

RAILS Reopening Survey Continues

Many libraries in the RAILS service area updated their pandemic service models in December, and shared these changes via our reopening survey on the RAILS COVID-19 Pulse Page. Revisions to our survey results dashboard include an easier look at whether or not libraries are allowing patrons inside their doors, clearer direction to the downloadable spreadsheet of data, and an update on how updated information is shared. All RAILS libraries are encouraged to continue to update their information as services change using the survey form.

Update on RAILS Staff EDI Workplace Climate Team

The RAILS EDI Workplace Climate Team met on January 6 to complete an initial inventory of four core relationship categories: RAILS staff to members, staff to partner organizations, staff to RAILS Board, and staff to staff. With this initial inventory now complete, the team will begin the planning phase of their work. They will revisit the inventories and identify themes, priorities, and goals that they will work with Elisabeth "Biz" Lindsay-Ryan, our EDI consultant, to address/implement.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

Approximately 328 Members Attend December RAILS Member Update

Attendees at our December 8 member update heard Greg McCormick, Illinois State Library Director, discuss changes to the administrative rules concerning nonresidents and the 2021 public library per capita grant. RAILS staff gave an update on our programs/services as well. A recording is available on the RAILS YouTube page.

Modeling Best Practices & Innovation

RAILS Staff Attend Research Institute for Public Libraries

Approximately 15 RAILS staff attended sessions during the [2020 Research Institute for Public Libraries (RIPL) Conference](#) in December. This event, originally scheduled to be held in Itasca but transitioned to online due to the pandemic, featured sessions offering practical and strategic methods of gathering, analyzing, and using data for planning, management, and communicating impact. Staff attended sessions focused on survey construction, data tools, and community engagement among others.

SimplyE Update

Deirdre Brennan and Leila Heath, RAILS Library Resources and Programs Manager, attended a SimplyE Council summit meeting in late November. The group discussed goals, obstacles and plans for the initiative. RAILS will continue to be involved with the project as new procedures and factors are explored to determine the viability and sustainability of [SimplyE](#) for our members.

RAILS Staff News

Dan Bostrom Elected to SLA Illinois Board of Directors

Congratulations to Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, who was recently elected to the Special Libraries Association (SLA) Illinois Community Board of Directors. Dan was elected for a three-year term: 2021 President-Elect; 2022 President; 2023 Past President.

Consortial Reports

CARLI/I-Share

No report.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

- CCS has joined the Innovative Development Partner Program. Development of Vega Discovery is currently underway. The product is available for Sierra standalone libraries now, and development for Polaris and consortia customers is moving forward.
- CCS has received 10 responses to our website RFP, which we will begin reviewing the week of December 14. Thanks to RAILS and PrairieCat for sharing their experience with vendors with Kathleen Weiss, User Experience Specialist. Extra thanks to Brian Smith for his time discussing L2 integration and other functionality.
- The Long Range Planning has recommended a three-year strategic plan to Governing Board. The board will review the plan in January.
- Executive Committee has approved an updated salary schedule, to go into effect January 1. Working with HR Source on benchmarking was a positive experience. I appreciated the diversity of positions they compared our job descriptions to and feel confident that we are (or will be with some minor adjustments) compensating employees appropriately.
- 15 CCS libraries have gone fine free in calendar year 2020. 21 of 28 libraries are now fine free ([list](#)). CCS will be coordinating a second bulk fine waive with Innovative in January 2021. This is an opportunity for newly fine free libraries to clear patron accounts with minimal staff intervention.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative (PLC)

- In November, Pinnacle upgraded to the newest version of Polaris, Polaris 6.6. The new version of Polaris contains several updates for Leap, the web-based version of the ILS. At this point, almost all public services functions have been implemented in the web app. By the end of 2021, Innovative plans to have Technical Services and System Administration added as well.
- Innovative has invited Pinnacle to participate in its development partner program for their next-generation discovery solution, Vega Discover. We are currently in negotiations, but the current plan is to spend most of 2021 configuring the software, with a soft launch in the Fall/Winter and a full replacement of our OPAC in the Spring/Summer of 2022. The most notable feature in the new discovery layer is the work-level rollups that combine multiple formats of a title into one entry.
- Many of our libraries have been working with local school districts to provide library cards to students at nearby schools. With data from the school's registration system, Pinnacle creates

patron accounts in the ILS and the library/school provides these new cards to the students. This year, the "Student Success" program, which was launched by the White Oak Library District last year, has been expanded to include the large Valley View school district in Bolingbrook and Romeoville. In total, 15,185 Valley View students were issued library cards to a Pinnacle library. Other Pinnacle libraries are currently working with their schools to provide similar access either through a bulk import or on an individual basis.

PrairieCat

- PrairieCat is nearing completion of our FY22-25 Strategic planning process. The finalized plan will be presented to our Delegates Assembly at our January meeting.
- PrairieCat continues to work with IMRF in our effort to rejoin the pension plan for FY22. We have cleared several hurdles and are now awaiting final cost analysis.
- Putnam County School District, a current member, has elected to have their primary school added to the system. We have begun work on that project. Lostant Community library, a new member, continues to work towards integration.
- Marengo-Union Library District just opted to join PrairieCat, and their official IGA approval will occur at our Jan. 27th Delegates Assembly. They will join us as a fully participating member.
- The PrairieCat mobile app has launched, and we recently added five new members, bringing the total libraries participating to 43. This project is opt-in, and the provider is Capira, Inc. The integration of curbside services into the app is also complete and will be launched shortly. Previously, Capira curbside was only available on the web.
- Migration of our support and library homepage websites to Cherry Hill hosting has begun. This project should wrap up in the next two weeks.

Resource Sharing Alliance NFP (RSA-NFP)

- With the changes to library services and many libraries moving back to curbside, RSA has spend a good amount of time reworking notice text for lots of our libraries. We've also been working with our 44 school libraries as they navigate the in-school, partial in-school, and fully virtual teaching styles. Sometimes those change on a weekly basis.
- We continue to help libraries go fine free with another one of our largest members going fine free on 1 Dec. For the most part, this has gone very smoothly for all the libraries participating.
- RSA's has hired a new Member Services User Experience Coordinator who will start in January. This will get us fully staffed again. This position is one of our hardest to train and we plan to do a combo of 1 or 2 days a week in the office with one other person and scheduled virtual training. For the technical side of the position are many SirsiDynix trainings available all the time, so we'll be able to keep them busy learning. On the plus side, we need a new RSA website and having someone with no RSA experience makes for a completely different set of eyes on the design.
- We continue to run several online trainings and committees each month. In January we'll start a new Membership Structure committee to redesign RSA's membership levels into something more modern and fitting with our current suite of products and services. We offered a 3-day

basic cataloging workshop which has proven very popular and we'll run that monthly until demand wains.

- Finally, our new help desk goes live January 12th, ready or not! It's hard to learn a new help desk/CRM/task manager when you aren't actually using it. We've spent some staff time reviewing and playing, and have several scheduled group and one-on-one trainings through the go-live date. Then we'll break it, figure out what broke, fix it, and move forward. We're excited about the stats and overall view of our services that will come from this. We're migrating much of our operation over to Salesforce which will allow us to track things we've wanted to, but couldn't efficiently before now.
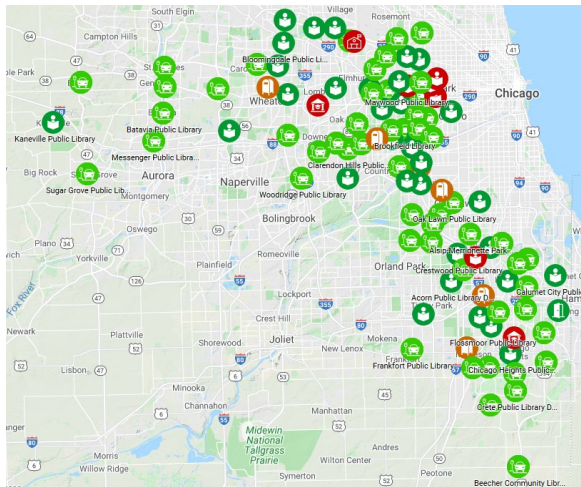
Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

No report.

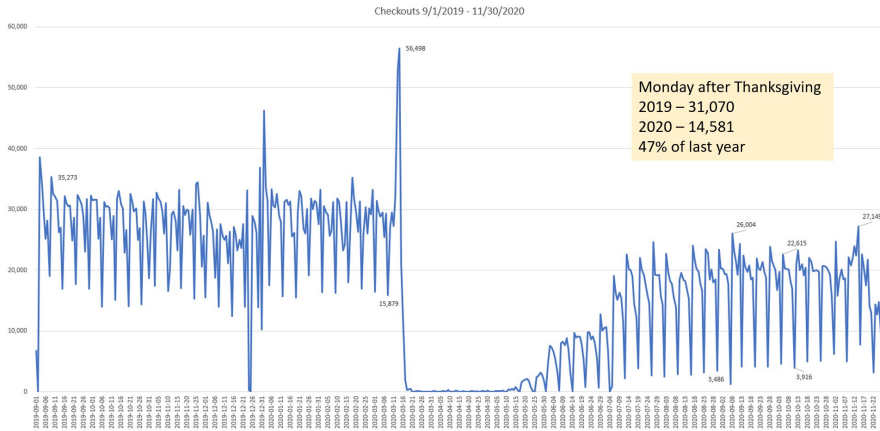## System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

COVID-19 Response

SWAN has created a public map that is categorized by service status. Libraries desired an at glance view of the libraries either closed, open but performing curbside, or fully open to the public.
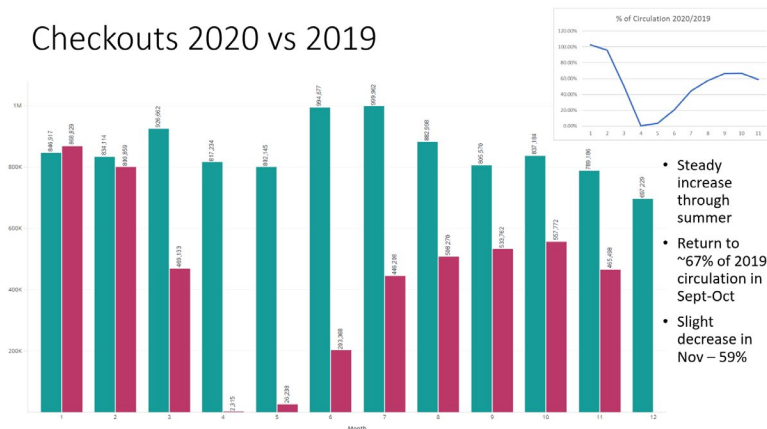

SWAN usage trends show overall libraries circulating around 67% of last year's totals. Holds placed however are pretty close to the levels of 2019, but with the fill rate of holds not keeping up with demand.
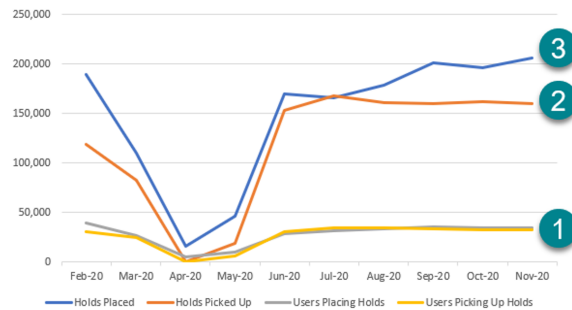
Checkouts 9/1/2019 - 11/30/2020

Monday after Thanksgiving
2019 – 31,070
2020 – 14,581
47% of last year

Checkouts 2020 vs 2019

% of Circulation 2020/2019

- Steady increase through summer
- Return to ~67% of 2019 circulation in Sept-Oct
- Slight decrease in Nov – 59%

Holds Placement & Pick-up: Feb-Nov. 2020

1. Number of Users placing and picking up holds has stabilized and matches pre-pandemic numbers (~34,000/mo)
2. Hold pick-ups steady since June (avg ~160,000/mo)
3. Since pandemic, holds placed outpace filled holds

Aspen Discovery Project

SWAN is piloting the Aspen Discovery website as a possible replacement of the current Enterprise OPAC. We will be running a pilot with seven libraries to run beta versions of the new catalog within the library, with planned usability testing with public library users.

Milestone	Target Dates
Kickoff	December 14th, 2020

RAILS Consortia Committee | January 11, 2021

Pilot lead training	December 2020 - January 2021
Beta catalog configuration	December 2020 – January 2021
Configuration and development	February 2021 – March 2021
Research activities	February 2021 – March 2021
Library staff training	January 2021
Beta launch	January/February 2021
Catalog decision and board approval	April 2021

SWAN100 Project

SWAN completed the data migration for the libraries Glenside, Roselle, and Warrenville Public Library Districts into the consortium. The libraries went live on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. This migration project was organized under the "SWAN100" as the consortium is now 100 libraries. The SWAN consortium now serves a combined service population total of 1.9 million within a 775 square mile area.

SWAN100 project highlights:

- Migrations from three standalone systems on three different ILS with three individual data loaders within SirsiDynix's project team
- Library training conducted 100% online by SWAN staff with sessions recorded
- New online interactive training for cataloging and circulation developed using Articulate Storyline 360 and Rise 360
- Go-live support provided with a combination of on-site staff and online rooms for meeting and screen sharing
- Library welcome kits with large maps of the SWAN library service area to display to patrons, inflatable swans for library promotion, and bookmarks for distribution to patrons informing them about the resources available to them
- A new technique where resource sharing is configured for the new libraries where the first 30 days is set to only borrow material from other libraries, which helps ease library staff into a consortium setting, with a flexible future date set for lending material afterwards to the full membership
- A cost analysis of the SWAN100 library's total expenses supporting a standalone arrangement show on average a $60,000 in annual savings after joining SWAN.

Budget Planning

The SWAN budget planning has started with an early draft of its budget. There will be a membership meeting held in February with a final budget approval at the March 4, 2021 SWAN Quarterly meeting.