

16 April 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – April, 2021

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

Statewide database funding

On March 31, Joe, Monica, Mary and I met with House Minority Leader Jim Durkin and his aide, Mike Mahoney, about the statewide database funding proposal. Beck Spratford arranged this meeting, and Tom Stagg was also in attendance. They were very interested in the proposal and saw its financial merits, in particular. Subsequently, Mike reached out to Becky, and then to me, suggesting the establishment of a task force that will report back to the General Assembly, no later than January 1, 2022, about funding of this initiative. Monica also reached out to Representative Michelle Mussman and she has agreed to be cosponsor of the task force bill, so that we now have bipartisan support. David Seleb has arranged a meeting with Senate President Don Harmon on April 23 at 12.30 pm, right before our board meeting, which is an opportunity for the board to hear what President Harmon has to say. I have also reached out to Speaker Welch (my local representative) and Kathy Parker sent Senator Hastings the proposal also

Delivery quarantine ended

As I reported to you via email, we ended our delivery quarantine effective April 12. IHLS ended theirs on Wednesday, April 14. There really hasn't been any feedback from members, so I guess the timing was right.

Find More Illinois update

On Friday, April 9, Anne Slaughter, Eric Bain, Leila Heath and I met with staff and directors from the LinkIn libraries to talk with them about the possibility of them joining Find More Illinois. They currently use InReach, a Ill resource sharing product. It was a very productive meeting, with great questions and answers. We are awaiting further developments with great interest. We promised to get back to them with some additional information, and we will keep the board informed. This would be a great step forward for Find More Illinois.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Advocacy issues for the board to promote and support

On March 31, 2021, President Biden released his infrastructure plan which fails to include funding for library facilities. The proposal would provide only half the level of grants for school facilities – including school libraries – that the House approved last year. From ALA:

While we're concerned that libraries were omitted from President Biden's plan, it's only the first step of the legislative process. We're glad that the Administration has brought focus to modernizing our infrastructure. But it's crucial that the White House and Congress hear: libraries are part of our infrastructure, and the time to invest is now.

Read more [here](#), including steps you can take.

Help libraries be the best they can be

School library data project

There have been some development related to this project. Michael set up a meeting with high level staff at Follett – the vendor with the lion's share of the market for school library technology, especially integrated library systems – to ask them to assist us with understanding the workforce in Illinois school libraries. They had concerns about contractual requirements that they not share certain information, but they agreed to look into how they could help us.

We also filed a FOIA request with ISBE, as they require for any inquiries about data. We received a spreadsheet that provides some limited information so we are going to make additional FOIA requests to better understand the information.

Prepare libraries for the future

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion update

RAILS staff have completed Module 1 of the training with Biz Lindsay-Ryan. We are now discussing next steps – topics, in person vs zoom, etc. The Climate Team will continue to meet monthly to develop concrete next steps that we can take to improve the RAILS culture and organization, to make it more diverse, equitable and inclusive. The Board EDI committee continues to move forward. All three subcommittees have met and identified priorities, and next week Biz will be

conducting a training for the committee on terminology. Biz will report to the board at the April meeting on our work so far.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Board engagement survey results

This topic is on the agenda for further discussion. We received many great comments and suggestions and have incorporated many of them in our work already. There is a document in the packet that details some possible next steps and I look forward to talking with the board about them, and hearing further suggestions.

Statement of Economic Interest

You should receive an email from the Cook County Clerk's Ethics Department regarding filing of your Statement of Economic Interests (SEI).

If you do not receive an email, please let Emily know. Also, after you file, forward Emily your confirmation email from Cook County. The confirmation is submitted to the Illinois State Library with our annual System Area and Per Capita Grant Application.

Board election

The nominating committee met on April 12 to review the candidates and confirm the ballot. We are very pleased, as were they, at the number and diversity of candidates; 12 candidates for 2 At Large seats and 5 candidates for 3 Trustee seats. The election begins on April 21 and ends on May 7.

This Month at RAILS – April 2021



- indicates items we encourage board members to promote to staff and/or trustees at their library and their type of library.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing



Find More Illinois Welcomes First Nonautomated Library

Waynesville Township Library is now live in [Find More Illinois](#) (FMI), and is the first participant without an automated catalog of some kind. FMI will provide Waynesville with an online catalog at a very reasonable cost, and give patrons access to the materials in many other libraries' catalogs as well.



Find More Illinois allows anyone to search multiple library online catalogs all at one time. Patrons and staff from participating libraries can place requests for items and receive them through RAILS delivery. Costs are reasonable and are scaled to make participation affordable for libraries of different sizes. Thirty public libraries, four high school libraries, and one academic library currently participate. See more information at findmoreillinois.org.

Annual Consortia In-Service Day

RAILS held our annual Consortia In-Service Day on March 26. About 50 LLSAP staff, as well as IHLS and RAILS staff members attended. Lynn Hoffman from Somerset County Library System in New Jersey gave a presentation on working effectively in the virtual environment. There was also an opportunity for each consortium to share information about their latest projects.

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

eRead Illinois Update

[eRead Illinois](#) renewals start this month. The process is automated and libraries simply need to visit the website and fill out a form to renew their membership for next fiscal year.



RAILS also revamped the eRead Illinois sign-up process. This will greatly expedite the process for onboarding new libraries.

Baker & Taylor (our eRead Illinois vendor) supplied [SOPPA \(Student Online Personal Protection Act\)](#) compliance documentation to distribute to eRead Illinois school library members. RAILS is providing the information as a courtesy; actual SOPPA compliance is between the school and Baker & Taylor.

RAILS E-Book Grant Update

RAILS continues to purchase K-12 content for eRead Illinois through [e-book grant](#) funds awarded by the Illinois State Library last fall. The expenditures noted below represent 63% of grant funds and are on track with the spending plan submitted to ISL. Spending will continue on a monthly basis through May.

E-Book Grant Purchases through March 2021

Material Type	Number of Items	Total Expenditures
E-books	1,918	\$48,365
Audiobooks	585	\$29,873
Totals	2,503	\$78,238

RAILS Launches Revised E-Resources Access Pulse Page

Recognizing the great interest in electronic resources among libraries and library patrons, RAILS is expanding our e-content pulse page. The [“new” page](#) will explore what RAILS and libraries are doing to improve access to electronic resources (databases and online services) and e-content (e-books, audiobooks, and digital magazines).

Explore More Illinois Is Live!



[Explore More Illinois](#) restarted April 1, with 17 museums, historical sites, and park districts around the state offering discounts. April 1 also marked the second anniversary of this online cultural pass program.



Currently, 344 libraries (297 RAILS libraries and 47 IHLS libraries) participate. Patrons from these libraries have started making reservations at available attractions. RAILS will continue to work on adding libraries and recruiting new attractions as the state eases COVID-19 restrictions.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

Homeless Training Institute Discounted Pricing



RAILS is partnering with [Homeless Training Institute](#) to offer discounted annual subscription pricing for staff training. Ryan Dowd, who runs the second-largest homeless shelter in Illinois, conducts the training for libraries that serve homeless, addicted, and mentally ill patrons who struggle to follow the rules.

EBSCO Deals – New Features and Resources Added



[EBSCO packages for public libraries](#) and [EBSCO packages for K-12 libraries](#) include a variety of core databases and additional choices from a list of options. New features include middle school and elementary school packages, as well as special options for K-12. New sign-ups and renewals for all RAILS packages are due by June 15.

EBSCO Learning Express Discounts



[Learning Express](#) is a highly-acclaimed e-learning solution that provides support to students and professionals for academic skill-building, standardized test prep, career certification test prep, and more.

Job & Career Accelerator includes the test prep, plus many valuable resources for job seekers.

Workforce Solutions includes some features from the first two products, and provides additional assistance with learning other workplace skills.

Discounts Related to Coding in Libraries



[Prenda Code Club](#) empowers libraries to engage the "Coding-in-Libraries" movement. It is both a digital resource, through its self-paced learn-to-code software for kids ages 8-18, and a library program, through its training and support for library staff to start code clubs - no coding expertise required!

Career Online High School (COHS)/Smart Horizons Career Online Education

RAILS continues to work with Smart Horizons as they start to transfer COHS management from Gale. Together, we are working on updating student onboarding and marketing materials and websites. RAILS staff will also lead another COHS networking group meeting on May 4.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

RAILS Trustee Networking Event, May 11



RAILS is holding an online roundtable on "[Strategic Planning for Trustees](#)," on Tuesday, May 11, from noon–1 p.m. Greg Pronevitz, from Greg Pronevitz Library Consulting., will give a short presentation on the importance of strategic planning for public library boards and what trustees should know when heading into a strategic planning initiative.

There will also be a breakout session with an opportunity to connect with other trustees and a Q&A. All public library trustees from RAILS member libraries are invited.

Virtual Networking Group Visits Help Engage All Levels of Library Staff

RAILS staffers Deirdre Brennan, Dan Bostrom, and Monica Harris continue to attend virtual meetings of RAILS networking groups to learn about pandemic successes and challenges and to find out how RAILS can help. These visits also provide a perfect opportunity to engage with library staff at all levels.

Recent groups visited include: Supporting Administrators in Libraries Networking Group, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color) Networking Group, Assistant Directors Networking Group, Library Early Literacy Advocates, and Spanish Programming Networking Group.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



Project Descriptors for My Library Is... School Library Grants

As reported last month, RAILS awarded 14 My Library Is... Grants to school library members. AISLE helped evaluate the grant applications. More details about the award-winning projects are now available on the [RAILS website](#). RAILS and AISLE are excited to work with each of these school libraries and look forward to seeing the outcome of their projects.

My Library Is...Presentation at PrairieCat Delegates Assembly

RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom will give a presentation on the My Library Is... campaign at the next PrairieCat Delegates Assembly on Wednesday, April 28, including campaign next steps and how libraries can get involved. PrairieCat is one of six RAILS-supported shared online catalogs or LLSAPs.

Advocating for Libraries

April Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, and ILA

RAILS staff meet monthly with staff from AISLE, IHLS, and ILA to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Topics discussed in April included:

- Lessons learned from the March collaborative program on “System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators.” The program was very successful and we discussed offering it every year.
- My Library Is... Grants for school libraries (see above)
- SOPPA ((Student Online Personal Protection Act)

- Update on RAILS' work on a statewide database proposal
- Potential collaboration with the RAILS Advocacy Committee re school libraries and academic preparedness for college

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

RAILS Grant Writing Workshop a Success!

Approximately 25 RAILS member library staff participated in a three-part grant writing workshop with Stephanie Gerding, author and grant expert supporting libraries across the country. The workshop was designed to help libraries research, plan, and design winning grant proposals. Grant writing is one of the CE topics our members request most.

Initial feedback was positive. As one attendee commented: *I just want to thank RAILS for this amazing opportunity to be able to participate in this wonderful workshop. I think this was one of the most useful and worthy workshops I have viewed in a very long time. The presenter was engaging and the information was so easy to follow, and it will go a long way in helping me to write winning grants for my library. Thank you again!*

RAILS Helps Members Meet Requirements of Workplace Transparency Act

RAILS again offered harassment prevention training to assist member libraries in fulfilling the training requirements of the [Workplace Transparency Act](#). Several hundred RAILS members registered to attend the April 14 session for all staff and the April 21 session focused on harassment prevention from a management perspective. Both sessions were recorded and are available in the [RAILS CE Archives](#) through the end of the year.

Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights

Upcoming CE events include webinars on early literacy (May 6), Library of Congress Classification (April 30 and May 14), and virtual reader's advisory (May 20).

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service



Time Running Out for RAILS Libraries to Certify

All RAILS libraries must complete the [online certification process](#) by May 15 to continue to be eligible to receive RAILS services and Illinois State Library grants. Libraries use L2 to certify and must complete the FY 2020 [interlibrary loan statistical survey](#) before starting the certification form.

The table below shows the number of RAILS libraries of all types that have completed the entire process thus far. Please help spread the word about the need to certify! We do not want any library to lose access to system services or State Library grants.

Library Type	Total #	# Completing Certification
Academic	118	
Public	412	
School	558	
Special	178	

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change



RAILS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training Grants

In late March, RAILS launched our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training Grants. These grants of up to \$2,000 support RAILS libraries, networking groups, and library consortia looking to organize a training event for other member library staff focused on EDI concepts. The deadline is May 31. More information is available on the [RAILS website](#).

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement



All Are Welcome at April 27 RAILS Member Update

The next RAILS Member Update is on Tuesday, April 27, from 1:30–3:30 p.m., via Zoom. All RAILS Board members are invited to attend and to spread the word to staff/trustees at their library and the type of library they represent. [Register here](#).

Topics include:

- Greg Pronevitz, the consultant RAILS has been working with to plan for the future of our delivery service, will talk about his findings thus far, including opportunities to improve delivery service through automation, and what this will mean for RAILS members.
- Greg McCormick from the Illinois State Library will discuss the FY 2022 state budget outlook for libraries and library systems and give the latest news on the American Rescue Plan Act and its impact on Illinois libraries.

- Update on RAILS efforts to obtain statewide funding for a suite of electronic databases that would be available to all Illinois libraries/residents
- Latest COVID-19 related news affecting libraries, including the latest information from the REALM project (REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums)
- New RAILS discounts and group purchase offers that will save our members money
- Reopening of our Explore More Illinois online cultural pass program

RAILS Engages Members at Virtual Reaching Forward Illinois

The Reaching Forward (RF) and Reaching Forward South (RFS) conferences are joining forces in 2021. Registrants can attend [Reaching Forward Illinois](#), for one fee. RAILS is a gold-level sponsor.

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, presented the program "Support Your Local Writers Community with inkie.org" at RFS in April. Joe Filapek, RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education, and Becky Spratford, RAILS Board Member, will present "Peek Behind the Admin Curtain: Trustee Secrets All Library Staff Need To Know" on May 7 at RF. (Becky also presented several programs solo at RFS.)

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FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Action items from previous meeting and status report

As requested at the last meeting, this document details action items from the March meeting, who is doing what and when.

Set up joint meeting with ISL and IHLS – Executive Director

I emailed Leslie Bednar and am waiting to hear back. The IHLS Executive Committee was discussing it at their meeting this week.

Develop budget for FY 2022 – RAILS staff

This work is in progress. A draft operational plan will be discussed at the April meeting and budget impact in FY 22 will be discussed.

Strategic planning proposals – Executive Director

Monica and I have met with three consulting firms and still await two proposals.

Board engagement survey follow up – RAILS staff, board committee chairs

Our board agenda includes an item for further discussion of the engagement survey and follow-up. There is a document in the packet which details progress and also some requests for clarification.

Statewide database proposal – Executive Director, board members

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