RAILS
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

16 April 2021

TO: **RAILS Board of Directors**

FROM: **Deirdre Brennan**

SUBJECT: **FY2022 RAILS budget and plan of service discussion**

As reported last month, we are in the midst of budget preparation right now and it is already clear that it is going to be very tight this year. We have not had any increase in our appropriation since FY2011, despite the fact that prices have gone up and programs and services have expanded as library usage and needs have increased.

We are still refining and collecting cost information in many areas so this is not a final budget. We will present a final proposed detailed budget at the May board meeting. Below are some highlights of changes and issues, as we know them now. Thanks to Jim for his excellent work, as always.

At this point, our budget for the General Fund has expenditures exceeding revenues by $459,959, while through March of 2020 our expenditures for this fiscal year are $606,395 below budget. We expect to finish somewhere between $300K and $400K below budget this year.

On the revenue side, in FY 22, the most significant item is that Investment Income is budgeted $143,213 below the prior year budget due to the decline in interest rates. We are budgeting for rates to increase gradually from current levels. I think there is some upside potential to this budget.

The budget amount for the APC grant is unchanged. The budget for fees for services increases approximately $56,000 and for reimbursements $182,000, but these increases are offset by the increased expenditures associated with them, particularly for reimbursement.

Total expenditures are at this point budgeted to increase by $601,509. Personnel expenditures will increase approximately $269,000. A 3% increase across the board effective July 1, 2021 is budgeted. No increases were included in the FY 2020 budget, but were recently implemented and are incorporated into the FY 20 base amounts. Other personnel related expenditures decline slightly because of a $36,000 decrease in health, dental and life insurance costs, as we experienced no increase for calendar year 2021.

E-Resource expenditures are budgeted to increase by $183,000. This expenditures include those for E-Read content and group purchasing and are offset by increased fees for these services.

Vehicle expenditures are budgeted to increase approximately $71,000 largely from increased fuel prices and insurance costs.

Professional services increase approximately $104,000 as we have included expenditures for such services as EDI, L-2 and Delivery consulting. Contractual Services expenditures are budgeted approximately $111,000 higher primarily from increases in Catalog Membership and My Liibrary Is grants.

We are still refining the IT budget, which could result in changes to equipment and telecommunications expenditures.

We also will be budgeting for capital expenditures approximating $150,000 for server storage replacement, delivery iPads and phone related equipment.

Major programs and budget areas:

Delivery and LLSAP support
These two areas constitute 50% of our budget. As you know, we continually seek ways to make our delivery processes as cost efficient as possible. We are about to issue an RFP to ascertain if additional outsourcing would be more economical than in-house work.

At a previous meeting, we discussed our LLSAP support (which is made up of both annual support and grants to libraries to assist them in joining LLSAPs) and the importance of balancing this financial support with the needs of non-LLSAP libraries.

Consulting and continuing education
Along with delivery, training is a top need for libraries and is heavily used. We are currently evaluating our CE to ensure that we are offering the best range of training for our libraries. We did learn a lot about virtual programs this year – while many people prefer in person training, there is no doubt that we had greater participation during the pandemic because of the virtual nature, and virtual training is also lower in unit cost because we can always include more people on a webinar than in person. Hopefully, we can increase member satisfaction with our CE offerings and do it more economically.

Finance
Jim Kregor has announced his retirement in January of 2022, and some of his finance team will be right behind him. This is a huge loss and we will miss his commitment and knowledge very

much. We are just beginning internal discussions about what organizational changes might be made and how to manage the transition.

Robust IT infrastructure
As we have discussed on several occasions, is essential that we keep our IT infrastructure robust. We are purchasing laptops this year, but we also need to upgrade our phone system (more compatible with Zoom, no more need for desk phones and other advantages) and purchase servers next year.

My Library Is
Of course, we want to keep the focus on My Library Is which has been a very successful program. We want to expand the grants made to school libraries for these projects to $50,000.

New website
It is time to upgrade our website, estimated cost is $57,600.

EDI
We will continue our commitment to EDI, both internally and with our board committee's work to assist libraries. We have budgeted $28,000 for our consultant next year, a $2,000 increase over this year.

Strategic planning
As I reported last month, it is time to begin a new planning cycle. It's been 10 years since RAILS was formed, and much has changed, especially over the last year. We need to re-envision RAILS and its role in serving members. I anticipate consultant costs will be approximately $35K.

Cataloging services
This project will use the information gathered from the special cataloging support survey and establish a centralized cataloging center to provide original cataloging and world language cataloging services free to member libraries. This is not available through the Catalog Maintenance Center in IHLS. We estimate the cost in FY 2022 will be $50,000. This service helps libraries in expanding access to unique resources by providing useful, timely, and free cataloging. This service provides ongoing cataloging support to specialized languages and format cataloging and will include Spanish, German, Arabic and other languages.

We have included the extensive list of statewide programs in which we participate, and the ones we fund in total. We will be asking for financial relief next year from the state library for both L2 expenditures ($75,000 which is comprised of $35,000 ongoing consulting and staff time of Brian Smith and Wayne Dixon) and the world language cataloging at $50,000.

It is important that you have a complete list of what services we are currently providing, expansion of these services and new services which are needed. Obviously, if the board directs us to make cuts, we will do so, but it will mean a diminishment in services when libraries have discovered they need us more than ever.

RAILS FY 2022 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application

3.0 System Operational Plan

This document presents the Reaching Across Illinois Library System's (RAILS) operational plan for FY 2022. Our overarching goal in implementing this plan will be to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to RAILS member libraries and helping them to provide the best possible service to their customers.

This plan was developed with a great deal of input from RAILS member libraries as is required by the Illinois State Library and administrative rules related to library systems. It follows the arrangement of the revised RAILS strategic plan approved by the RAILS Board in September 2018. All activities included in the plan are aligned with and support statutory priorities for Illinois library systems as noted.

Strategic Plan Goal One: *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*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond	Promote/strongly encourage resource sharing via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. Promote RAILS programs/services aimed at helping libraries expand resource sharing efforts as detailed below. Help plan and participate in meetings with the Illinois State Library (ISL) staff, and Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) staff to discuss issues of mutual interest Work with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve, increase, and promote resource sharing to all types of Illinois libraries. Goals include increasing the statewide culture of resource sharing, improving awareness of resource sharing, and providing services for the unserved. Collaborate with ISL, IHLS, Chicago Public Library System (CPLS), Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL), Illinois Library Association (ILA), Special Libraries Association-Illinois Chapter (SLA-IL), and other stakeholders to expand resource sharing. See	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	specific details on proposed collaborative efforts below. Collaborate with and support the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). Participate in ICOLC activities that are relevant to RAILS priorities, including the task force investigating OCLC business practices, products, and pricing. Provide ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. Participate in decision making re making changes to DPLA's SimplyE Community Advisory Group.	
Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing	**Promote/Support LLSAP Membership** Provide a mix of financial support and in-kind services to six RAILS LLSAPs: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA-NFP, and SWAN. Approximately 383 RAILS library agencies (539 individual buildings) participate in one of these LLSAPs. Offer catalog membership grants to encourage libraries to join one of the six RAILS LLSAPs. These grants help make LLSAP membership more affordable and increase resource sharing by making many more library materials available to more Illinois residents. Help members prepare for the upcoming requirement in the Illinois administrative rules to evaluate whether they will make their holdings available via a shared collection • Publicize Find More Illinois as an option for meeting this requirement • Pay particular attention to the difficulties school and special libraries may have in meeting this requirement, and discuss possible solutions with ISL Plan/conduct annual in-service day for all consortial staff to help them exchange news, ideas, and best practices	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Promote the value of consortia membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools and member encounters	
	Work with the RAILS Consortia Committee to expand resource sharing and promote consortial membership	
	Expand and Promote Find More Illinois (FMI)	
	Recruit libraries to join FMI. Provide training/ consulting. Heavily publicize FMI benefits to all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) via RAILS communication tools and member encounters.	
	Continue working with the nine (out of 10) LINKin libraries not currently participating in FMI to encourage them to join. These are large libraries and their participation would greatly enhance the materials available through FMI and encourage other large libraries to join.	
	Heavily promote the benefits of FMI to non-automated libraries, such as making it much more affordable to participate in an online catalog. Encourage these libraries to participate.	
	Heavily promote the benefits of FMI to standalone libraries and encourage them to participate	
	Continue to offer IHLS the opportunity to participate in FMI	
	Support High-Quality Cataloging	
	Continue and expand basic cataloging training implemented in FY 2020 and FY 2021	
	Offer additional cataloging training in response to member feedback	
	Offer new cataloging services to RAILS libraries in response to member feedback on cataloging needs that are not currently met within their own libraries or by the Cataloging Maintenance Center	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Work with the Illinois State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System, and other stakeholders to improve physical delivery services through streamlining and standardizing operations and evaluating alternative methods and best practices	**Providing Delivery Service Based on Need** Work with RAILS members of all types (academic, public, school, and special) to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs Continue contracting with Continental Transportation Logistics to provide outsourced delivery service Continue providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI libraries via ILDS Discontinue contract with Comet Messenger service to provide delivery to RAILS special libraries in the Chicago area and bring this service "in house." RAILS can conduct this service more efficiently and economically. Communicate changes to all libraries eligible for this service and ensure their smooth transition to RAILS Delivery service. Promote the need to complete quarterly delivery volume counts to RAILS members. Consult with libraries on an individual basis as needed. Examine delivery count data to determine potential changes to existing delivery routes. Continue to seek guidance/assistance from ISL to offer additional delivery points per library agency where needed to offer more equitable delivery service. This includes providing more than one delivery point to the 400+ Chicago Public School libraries. Request additional funding from ISL to purchase additional delivery vehicles Work with statewide delivery partners to move forward on delivery improvements, including exploring the possibility of purchasing label-less sorting equipment to save time and money for member libraries Continue working with the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) on potential future improvements to RAILS delivery service	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Delivery CE/Consulting Consult with members on delivery issues/concerns. Widely promote the use of the delivery help desk ticketing system via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. Promote delivery training videos available on the RAILS website. Determine whether additional videos are needed. Find additional ways to ensure that RAILS school libraries know about available delivery options, including heavily promoting these options at the in-person 2021 AISLE conference	
Develop and implement innovative projects to expand access to a wider variety of resources for Illinois residents, including providing access to digital content/e-resources and expertise	**eRead Illinois Axis 360** Explore alternative vendor options for eRead Illinois to ensure optimal user experience and potential growth Recruit RAILS libraries and IHLS non-SHARE libraries to join eRead Illinois. Support the training and marketing needs of participants. Evaluate eRead content to ensure that it continues to meet member needs Complete final evaluation of ISL e-book grant activities and submit required paperwork to ISL. Publicize benefits and impact of grant project to RAILS member libraries and other stakeholders. Use findings of these data gathering efforts to develop a more robust collection strategy for eRead Illinois in FY 2022. **BiblioBoard/inkie.org** Continue to partner with BiblioLabs to offer a variety of e-resources via the BiblioBoard platform Continue to widely publicize BiblioBoard/inkie.org resources as being free to all Illinois libraries courtesy of RAILS. Find ways to target these promotions at unserved areas as mentioned below.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Examine current marketing strategy to achieve deeper knowledge and use of all BiblioBoard and inkie.org resources by Illinois libraries	
	Develop/design templates for materials libraries can use to promote BiblioBoard resources directly to their customers	
	Continue offering group purchase pricing on BiblioBoard products for self-published authors	
	Explore More Illinois	
	Publicize program to all Illinois public libraries and encourage them to participate	
	Grow/expand the number and types of participating attractions	
	Continue to work with IHLS to recruit IHLS libraries and set them up in the program	
	Continue to work with WiLS to extend the program to Wisconsin residents	
	Explore additional multi-state partnerships in the Midwest	
	Change program name and branding as appropriate to reflect multistate participation	
	Expand Member Access to Additional E-Resources	
	Lead efforts to submit a proposal to Illinois legislators requesting access to state-funded databases for all who live in Illinois • Work with ISL, IHLS, ILA, AISLE, and other stakeholders • Recruit staff from libraries of all types to help advocate for state-funded database access. Provide talking points and guidance on how library staff can contact their legislators. • Help lead the task force established by the General Assembly to identify funding for statewide databases and other educational resources	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue to develop the Vendor Privacy Policies web page with links to privacy policies for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries. Based on member feedback, determine whether to expand the project to include academic, school, and specialized libraries. Continue dialogue with publishers on need for better e-book access/pricing for libraries/consortia Continue participation in Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author project to promote and encourage self-publishing	
Use economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their customers than they would be able to afford on their own	Explore new and advantageous deals for member libraries Gather member input on desired discounts/group purchases and implement new offerings as appropriate Use Consortia Manager to provide an infrastructure for managing RAILS group purchases and discounted resources • Streamline related work processes • Provide platform for member participation • Compile statistics for savings and usage for value-add narratives Promote ISL Try-It! Illinois database trial to RAILS members as a way for them to try new databases before purchase **Career Online High School Program (COHS)** Heavily promote availability of scholarships through COHS program via RAILS communication tools Use penetration map developed in FY 2021 to identify gaps where there are high numbers of adults without a high school diploma and publicize program to libraries in those areas Publicize program to youth services staff to help reach the many potential program participants who are young parents	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Conduct *Sparks* podcast interviews with Smart Horizons staff, library staff, program participants, etc. Continue to meet with networking group of COHS library staff participants to develop and promote the program Issue press release on program and encourage interested library patrons to check with their libraries for more information. This might encourage additional libraries to participate.	
Offer members a variety of opportunities to build collaborative relationships to share best practices, expertise, and to develop innovative solutions to common issues and challenges	Encourage use of RAILS mailing lists/online forums Establish new mailing lists/forums as needed Implement new email list software system and communicate resulting changes in RAILS email lists as detailed below Publicize existing networking groups. Assist in the formation of new networking groups as needed. Regularly publicize the benefits of belonging to a RAILS networking group Continue to build and strengthen relationships and engagement with RAILS networking groups. RAILS began this effort in earnest with virtual visits to networking groups during the pandemic and our efforts have paid off thus far. Initiate networking group recruitment project/ series of events to help encourage new staff at member libraries to join networking groups Schedule RAILS Online Roundtables (online forums hosted by networking groups) on a variety of topics of interest to RAILS member libraries of all types	
Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and	Plan/schedule virtual networking opportunities for staff from all types of libraries. Schedule in-person opportunities as appropriate.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
special) to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation	Work with other library organizations (AISLE, IACRL, SLA-Illinois, etc.) to plan/organize networking events and opportunities to exchange best practices. Publicize events/opportunities to the appropriate library types. Continue providing leadership and support to SLA-IL via the RAILS Member Engagement Manager serving as President of that group	

Strategic Plan Goal Two: *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Help member libraries ensure that current/ potential customers are aware of all of the programs/services/resources the library has to offer	**Expand My Library Is… Initiative** Conduct individualized surveys of the four types of RAILS libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) to determine needs not currently being met by the initiative • Analyze and implement survey findings and develop activities/resources to meet unmet needs as appropriate • Work with RAILS CE Team to plan/offer CE in response to needs identified via the surveys Continue to work with My Library Is… Advisory Group (consisting of staff from all types of libraries) to publicize the initiative and to develop new activities to help libraries prove their value and tell their stories Expand My Library Is… grant program for school libraries to help with the growing and dire need for school libraries to tell their stories more effectively Analyze use of My Library Is… website to determine which resources are used the most. Try to determine reasons why other resources are not being used as heavily and make changes to the website as appropriate. • Continue to heavily publicize key website resources/sections, including the *Elders of the Internet* video and media kit, talking	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	points for all types of libraries, the blog, etc. Continue to work with IHLS to further expand the initiative statewide Continue to work with ILA, AISLE, IACRL, SLA-IL, and other stakeholders on common goals/ activities re to the initiative to avoid duplication of efforts **Other** Utilize media monitoring software to track and report on coverage of RAILS and our member libraries by different media sources. Promote appropriate coverage via RAILS social media. Target RAILS and member library promotions at sources that cover library-related stories.	
Help member libraries prove their value to administrative bodies, funders, elected officials, etc.	The activities in the previous section will also help to meet this objective.	
Advocate for and help members advocate for all libraries as they face funding and other challenges	Initiate and participate in a wide variety of advocacy efforts to help all types of libraries to respond to any lingering effects/results of the COVID-19 pandemic, including funding challenges Work with the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee to educate the board about issues affecting RAILS and libraries that may require advocacy efforts locally, regionally, or nationally. Work with committee on initiatives/activities to help advocate for different types of libraries. Continue to schedule regular meetings with the AISLE Board, IHLS, and ILA to discuss collaborative projects to help school libraries deal with the challenges affecting them Continue with efforts to gather and analyze data on Illinois school libraries to get a better picture of school library needs in Illinois	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Recruit volunteer or paid intern to help with data collection • Investigate whether we can utilize FY 2022 certification process to help with data gathering efforts • Develop standards for school libraries and incorporate into annual certification in 2022 as appropriate Continue to work with the ILA Public Policy Committee to discuss upcoming legislation of importance to libraries. Keep RAILS libraries informed of important legislative issues. Provide advocacy alerts as needed via the *RAILS E-News* and website to help members advocate on important issues Encourage members to attend ILA legislative meetups and other events to advocate with legislators re the importance of libraries	

Strategic Plan Goal Three: *Help libraries be the best they can be*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Continue to provide continuing education (CE) to ensure ongoing staff development for all levels of staff at all types of libraries	Offer consulting/CE on resource sharing, library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules. (See also other sections of this document for information on CE/consulting for specific core system services.) Offer CE focused on the standards in *Serving Our Public* to help libraries meet per capita grant requirements • Explore expanding support for strategic planning through development of a toolkit or more structured consulting support for members Offer training and consulting in other mandated areas as needed, including harassment training Continue to gather member input on CE needs and implement training to meet those needs. Begin	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	using a revised assessment tool to capture impacts/ outcomes of RAILS-sponsored CE. Continue to partner with AISLE to identify training needs for school librarians and to offer joint CE opportunities based on that feedback Apply to become a PDH (professional development hours) provider to make it easier and faster to deliver CE to schools Investigate and possibly implement a learning management system for RAILS members Continue partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership Continue partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline Continue to serve as sponsor for library-related conferences as possible	
Ensure that all libraries are able to offer the best possible service to their community of users	**L2 – Library Directory & Learning Calendar** Continue to provide statewide leadership for L2. Host and maintain L2, make updates, provide user help and support. Continue development work on the "new L2" to implement additional features requested by users (including ISL, RAILS, IHLS, LLSAPs, and others) and to improve the user experience Continue to contract with Aten Design Group for L2 support **Certification** Work with RAILS members to ensure that they complete the certification process • Work with all RAILS members to ensure that they complete a strategic plan for their library. Provide CE and consulting to help with this effort as referenced above.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Develop school library standards and incorporate them into certification in 2022 as referenced above • Evaluate data gained from 2021 certification process and make any necessary changes • Work with ISL and other partners to evaluate requirements/process for school libraries to better align with their current situation and operations	
Ensure the ongoing education of library leaders and the development of leadership skills for library staff	Work with other stakeholders to plan/implement Directors University, the statewide training initiative for new public library directors. Determine what changes should be made to make program more effective. Work with other stakeholders to plan/implement the Elevate statewide initiative to recruit and nurture future Illinois library leaders. Determine what changes should be made to make the event more effective and to benefit as many library staff members as possible. Continue to offer CE workshops to help members to develop leadership skills Continue partnership with United for Libraries to provide statewide, online, on-demand trustee training. Publicize training widely. Provide networking opportunities for RAILS-area trustees, including Zoom meetings with an educational element and an opportunity for trustees to share best practices Consult with/attend library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements and to develop leadership skills	

Strategic Plan Goal Four: *Prepare libraries for the future*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Help libraries anticipate, understand and respond to changing social issues and customer needs	**General** Continue to provide leadership to help libraries respond to challenges in the outside world affecting library service Identify/monitor additional issues and trends affecting RAILS members and provide CE/consulting to help members respond to those issues Continue to develop Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website to help members respond to current issues and trends Produce monthly RAILS *Sparks* podcast featuring interviews on current issues/trends affecting libraries of all types • Determine effective way to gather feedback from *Sparks* listeners and respond to this feedback as appropriate **COVID-19 Related Issues** Continue providing information and leadership to RAILS members via the COVID-19 Pulse Page, RAILS CE events, the RAILS Executive Director's continued service on the REALM Steering Committee, and other activities Help members with advocacy efforts related to lingering effects of the pandemic, including funding challenges; and health, safety and other issues that will evolve over the course of time. Support library involvement in vaccine distribution and education. **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiatives** Work with the RAILS Board and member libraries to promote and foster equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) • Continue to support the RAILS Board EDI Committee and subcommittees • Investigate and possibly launch a cohort-model training for members on EDI best practices/competencies	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Explore possible grants that would support development of multiple library cohorts and provide financial sustainability for EDI work in general • Continue the work of the RAILS Climate Team to identify and implement internal best practices and initiatives for RAILS staff • Plan and participate in CE and consulting initiatives to promote EDI in libraries. Offer EDI-related CE to RAILS members based on the recommendations of the board EDI committee and member feedback. • Based on member input, continue to offer CE Event grants to help libraries, networking groups, and library consortia plan/offer EDI-focused training events of interest to library staff • Identify potential partners to expand the reach of our work, including ILA, IHLS, ISL and CARLI	
Partner with libraries and other stakeholders to foster an educated, engaged, and civil society	Activities related to helping members with advocacy efforts specified under Goal Two and the EDI items in the previous section also apply to this objective	
Expand access to library resources and services by addressing issues related to unserved and underserved Illinois residents and continuing to work toward a statewide library card	Continue to work with the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee to find and implement solutions to challenges related to the unserved in Illinois Work with ISL and other stakeholders to simplify nonresident card laws and rules and to expand the law to include innovative practices select RAILS libraries have already implemented • Work with ISL on an FAQ with answers to frequently asked questions on nonresident laws and rules Work with the Resource Sharing Committee to increase awareness within the library community to the significant number of Illinois unserved Work on obtaining statewide funding for a core suite of electronic databases that would be available to all system member libraries and unserved residents as specified above	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Promote BiblioBoard platform as a way to deliver e-content to anyone in Illinois, including the unserved. Target these promotions at unserved areas. Provide more information on intergovernmental agreements (IGA) in response to member feedback • Provide consulting and CE on IGA's • Expand IGA information on the RAILS website. Include example IGAs from member libraries. • Promote available IGA materials Promote the value of extending library services to the unserved to member libraries and help libraries promote services available to the unserved Publicize requirement for library boards to vote annually on participation in the nonresident program and for members to update their participation information via L2. Publicize the names of participating/nonparticipating libraries. Partner with ISL, IHLS, and ILA on efforts to issue a statewide library card and to lead efforts to achieve universal library service in Illinois	

Strategic Plan Goal Five: *Aim to be the best library system in the country*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Fully communicate and engage with members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	**Member Recruitment** Engage with libraries interested in RAILS membership. Visit potential members to ensure they meet membership criteria. Work with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL. **General Member Communication/Engagement** Promote available programs/services via RAILS communication tools and member encounters Redesign RAILS website to replace outdated version of Drupal	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Contract with designer/developer for special features • Gather feedback from all types of libraries, including via usability testing, and add more content that is needed/useful to members • Audit and evaluate use of current website content • Focus new homepage and menu structure in response to member feedback • Include content pages dealing with current issues, trends, and challenges faced by RAILS libraries of all types (Pulse Pages) • Migrate the RAILS website and project sites (as subsites of the RAILS site where appropriate) to the latest version of the Drupal content management system as a part of the redesign • Launch new website on railslibraries.org domain, communicate address change widely, and implement appropriate redirects from other domains Implement new email list software system (Listserv or other product to replace Mailman), utilizing L2 API for member authentication on RAILS-managed email lists. Communicate resulting changes in RAILS email lists to all members to ensure a smooth transition and uninterrupted use of all mailing lists. Coordinate with RAILS IT to change RAILS email domain to @railslibraries.org to coincide with change in website address Continue with project to evaluate/analyze *RAILS E-News*. Implement changes to weekly *RAILS E-News* based on results of project and feedback from members. Develop new communication strategies to ensure that all levels of staff at all RAILS member libraries are aware of the programs/services RAILS offers of direct benefit to them • Gather feedback from different levels of staff on how RAILS can communicate with	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	them more effectively. Initiate activities in response to this feedback. Expand use of video to promote RAILS programs/services to different audiences • Develop video series to capture more stories from member libraries. Feature interviews, news, and updates, as well as best practices/tips for libraries • Create more short orientation videos for staff from member libraries of all types, including videos with information on how to use different RAILS services and the benefits of those services to members. Video series will correspond to printed materials which will be available to all members. Visit as many member libraries throughout the RAILS area as possible either in person or virtually. Concentrate on libraries that have not been visited in two years and nonpublic libraries. Schedule regular RAILS member updates to share the latest RAILS news with members Offer "New Director Welcome" online discussions to promote RAILS programs/services Send all new RAILS library directors a welcome communication to acquaint them with system programs/services Exhibit at library conferences as appropriate, including conferences for different types of libraries Present programs at library-related conferences as appropriate to promote RAILS programs/services and the benefits of those programs/services for different types of RAILS libraries and different levels of RAILS staff **Multitype Communication/Engagement** Schedule informational/networking meetings for different library types, including virtual meetings	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Target nonpublic members for library visits, either in person or virtual	
	Use available type of library mailing lists to communicate system membership benefits	
	Investigate/implement more efficient way of producing e-newsletters targeted at academic, school, and specialized libraries	
	Conduct online school library meetings to acquaint schools with system offerings	
	Present programs/sponsor exhibit booths at conferences for different types of libraries	
	Continue to work on issues/challenges affecting specialized libraries via RAILS staff service on the SLA-IL Board of Directors	
	Social Media Communication/Engagement	
	Expand/enhance RAILS' social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) to engage members	
	Use social media to channels to promote our libraries to the general public	
	Use social media to promote RAILS benefits and services to our member libraries	
	Use social media to amplify library advocacy activities	
	Use social media to engage in conversations about current issues, member needs, and RAILS resources/initiatives	
	Track social media metrics and make strategy adjustments as necessary	
Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact	Continue to develop and foster a data culture at RAILS	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
and are helping to create the best possible future for all of our libraries	Continue to evaluate RAILS' programs/services to show their effectiveness and impact on members. Implement changes to RAILS programs/services as a result of these activities as appropriate. Experiment with new methods of engaging members with data literacy training Create survey to assess performance of RAILS CE events as referenced above Build up GIS mapping tools of RAILS's service area for members and internal use Continue to grow and develop Data in Libraries Pulse Page Continue to solicit member feedback via RAILS communication tools, surveys, and member encounters. Implement changes/additions to RAILS programs/services based on member input as appropriate. See other sections of this document for specific examples. Other data-related priorities are described elsewhere in this document and include: • Developing a new strategic plan with measureable objectives • Membership standards work • Continued development of L2 • Evaluation and analysis of e-book grant project • Continued evaluation/analysis of weekly *RAILS E-News*	
Recruit and engage a RAILS Board that is representative of the system membership and that creates and models best practices for board leadership	Communicate regularly with board through board mailing list and other means Keep board informed about important issues for RAILS and for libraries of all types Plan/implement orientation session at Burr Ridge service center for all new RAILS Board members. Invite existing board members to attend for a refresher.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Schedule board meetings in different parts of the RAILS area as possible so the board can learn about different areas of the system Continue to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board Support board conference/meeting attendance as appropriate Continue to implement results of March 2021 Board Engagement & Communications Survey Evaluate board portal on RAILS website to determine what changes can be made to make it a more useful tool for board members	
Ensure that all aspects of the RAILS organization use and model best practices in all that we do	Model effective EDI practices for members by sharing information on the RAILS' activities detailed in other sections of this document See other sections of this document for activities related to modeling best practices, including modeling innovative ways for members to share resources (BiblioBoard, Find More Illinois, Explore More Illinois, etc.); modeling effective ways to tell the library story; modeling effective ways to evaluate the impact of programs/services; etc.	
Deliver on the promise of organizational excellence by being agile, innovative, future-oriented, and member-focused	**New RAILS Strategic Plan** Develop a new RAILS Strategic Plan to replace the plan passed by the RAILS Board in 2018 • Re-envision RAILS' role and services to members in light of the vast changes brought to society and the role of libraries by the pandemic • Hire a consultant to help us with the process • Gather input from as many libraries of all types as possible throughout the RAILS area during all phases of the process • Develop the new plan with actionable goals and objectives that we can measure to show the impact of plan activities on our members • Publicize the plan widely to members from all types of libraries and other stakeholders	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Support & Develop RAILS Staff	
	Recruit RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and objectives	
	Encourage/support professional development for staff	
	Continue to hold regular staff meetings to keep all staff informed of the latest RAILS developments and to help staff at different service centers engage with each other	
	Continue to develop and promote a RAILS Staff EDI Initiative • Work with a consultant and staff-led climate team to work on ongoing issues as referenced above	
	Continue work of RAILS Employee Committee to develop collaborative activities for all staff	
	Evaluate possibility of staff in-service day in Burr Ridge during Spring of 2022. If this is cancelled again due to COVID-19 restrictions, the RAILS Employee Committee will continue offering staff learning opportunities via webinar.	
	Maintain Robust Technology Infrastructure	
	Perform necessary infrastructure work, including replacing host and storage servers and remote location routers	
	Complete the ongoing projects to distribute new staff computers, and to transition to Office 365	
	Investigate and implement new telephone system	
	Move forward on development of a delivery app, and roll out iPads and app use to delivery staff	
	Continue providing subsidized Zoom and conference calling accounts to appropriate RAILS member groups	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Complete the development of an internal Human Resources application to take in and track job applicants through the hiring process	
Engage in innovative projects on a statewide, national, and international level and help RAILS members model these projects for their community of users	See other sections of this document for additional information on innovative projects, including BiblioBoard and inkie.org, Explore More Illinois, MyLibraryIs…, L2, online roundtables, RAILS' EDI initiatives, etc.	
Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources to ensure maximum benefit to member libraries, library users, and Illinois taxpayers	Closely monitor RAILS investments and make changes as appropriate Continue to investigate and find efficiencies and cost savings, primarily through the budgeting and financial reporting processes, for RAILS operations	
Maintain a research and development role to provide leadership and innovation to help members provide the best possible service to their customers	See other sections of this document for activities related to research and development, including our work with LASA, evaluation/data activities, etc.	

3.2 Statewide Service Collaboration

RAILS collaborates with other systems on the following services and activities:

- RAILS collaborates with IHLS on the contract to provide statewide delivery service through ILDS.
- RAILS developed and manages and provides technical support for the statewide delivery ticketing system.
- RAILS works with the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA), IHLS, and ISL to provide greater efficiencies, service improvements, and cost savings for statewide delivery service.
- RAILS continues to lead efforts and works with our statewide delivery partners on delivery improvements, including exploring the possibility of innovations available through delivery automation.
- RAILS extends continuing education offerings to other library systems when possible, including the opportunity to view many of RAILS webinars in the CE Archives on the RAILS website.
- RAILS provides leadership and direction for the L2 statewide Library Directory & Learning Calendar. RAILS also hosts and maintains the calendar/directory, and provides ongoing technical support, including:
  - Making updates to L2 and performing development work to implement additional features requested by users (including ISL, RAILS, IHLS, LLSAPs, and others) and to improve the user experience
  - Providing ongoing user help and support, including responding to daily questions from system member libraries of all types
  - Providing an API so IHLS, LLSAPs, and other groups can use the L2 database for authentication and to populate library staff email lists and other library data into their own websites
  - Continuously evaluating, cleaning up, and updating data in the L2 directory
- RAILS works with IHLS and ISL to ensure that the annual certification process runs smoothly. Certification in 2021 was conducted via L2 for the first time. RAILS staff performed all development work needed to make this happen and provides ongoing L2 support for all system libraries during the certification process.
- RAILS welcomes IHLS participation in Find More Illinois.
- RAILS hosts the annual Consortial Staff In-service Day for staff from all ILS consortia in Illinois (CCS, I-SHARE, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA, SHARE, and SWAN), and features topical discussions and presentations of projects of specific interest to them.
- RAILS provides a statewide FOIA/OMA hotline. IHLS and RAILS members have used the hotline over 400 times since it began in FY 2017.
- RAILS supports trustee development by offering access to United for Libraries' *Short Takes for Trustees* and *Trustee Academy* to RAILS and IHLS members.
- RAILS subsidizes/provides a wide variety of e-resources through the BiblioBoard platform to anyone in the state of Illinois.
- RAILS makes the eRead Illinois Axis 360 shared collection available to IHLS members who do not participate in the SHARE catalog, and supports their training and marketing needs.
- RAILS is leading efforts to seek additional funding for a core group of online databases that would be available without cost to all Illinois libraries and residents.
- Some vendor discounts and group purchases coordinated by RAILS are also open to IHLS members.

- RAILS is extending participation in the Career Online High School scholarship program to IHLS and CPLS libraries, and will subsidize platform costs for the entire state.
- All Illinois public libraries are welcome to participate in RAILS' Explore More Illinois cultural pass program. At the time of this writing, 47 IHLS libraries participate.
- RAILS invited IHLS to fully participate in our My Library Is… initiative, including:
  - Offering to co-brand the website with the IHLS logo, and welcoming contributions to the site from IHLS members
  - Making all website resources available to all libraries in Illinois and beyond, including the *Elders of the Internet* video and media kit
  - Co-branding the talking points RAILS developed for the four different types of libraries
  - Inviting IHLS staff and staff from IHLS member libraries to participate in the My Library Is… Advisory Group
- RAILS initiated and continues to schedule and participate in regular meetings with IHLS staff and AISLE Board members to discuss collaborative efforts to support Illinois school libraries. RAILS is also leading efforts to gather more accurate and complete information on Illinois school libraries to help with advocacy efforts.
- RAILS is leading efforts to schedule a meeting with the RAILS and IHLS Boards to share ideas and to discuss common issues.
- RAILS works with statewide organizations, including AISLE, IACRL, and SLA-IL to develop networking and educational opportunities for staff from different types of libraries. A RAILS staff member serves as President of SLA-IL.
- RAILS regularly promotes services available through the Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC), including training opportunities.
- RAILS works with other statewide partners to plan the annual Directors University and Elevate statewide leadership programs.
- RAILS participates in statewide discussions with ISL, IHLS, and other stakeholders to help resolve issues related to the unserved in Illinois.
- RAILS is a sponsor of the Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project to promote independent Illinois authors, and collaborates with IHLS, CPL, and other stakeholders on project activities and initiatives.
- IHLS and CPLS members are welcome to post items to the Free/For Sale/Wanted page on the RAILS website.
- IHLS and CPLS members are welcome to post available job listings on the RAILS Jobs Board.
- RAILS invites IHLS to participate in RAILS projects/committees as possible, including the Resource Sharing Committee and the Consortia Committee.
- RAILS IT staff regularly collaborate with IHLS staff to share information and experiences re: common initiatives, including videoconferencing and web conferencing platforms, and the development of a mobile app for delivery route tracking.
- A RAILS staff member represents Illinois libraries (as appointed by the Illinois Library Association) on the Broadband Advisory Council.
- A RAILS staff member serves as Treasurer of both the LIMRiCC and LIRA cooperatives, which provide insurance to libraries statewide.
- RAILS and IHLS staff serve as ex officio members of ILA's Public Policy Committee.
- RAILS collaborates with and supports the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC).

- RAILS provides ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. The RAILS Executive Director serves as the backup representative to the DPLA Network Council for Illinois.