RAILS
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

21 May 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – May, 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**

COVID 19 developments – Vaccines and Masks
We have been discussing policy and procedure changes as a result of the new CDC guidelines on masks and the general availability of vaccines. We are working on a policy about staff vaccination requirements and guidelines, and discussing staff returning to offices. We are awaiting Julie Tappendorf's specific guidance for us. Of course, policy changes will be submitted to the Policy Committee and then to the full board, but we want to have all of our facts straight, first. Department heads will be returning to the office, at least one day a week, starting now.

There are many questions from members, of course, and we are discussing possible member updates, a joint program with ILA and IHLS to share information and updates to our website.

East Peoria buildings update
I emailed the board on May 4 about the unexpected news that we have to vacate our East Peoria buildings. At this point, we have identified a potential property on Sabrina Drive, just across the highway from the current location. We are working to determine what buildout and other work we need to do before we can move in. We know that we will have to update the cabling, at least, and are awaiting pricing and negotiating with the owner on what expenses they might take on. This situation is changing rapidly so I will certainly have more information at the board meeting, but we do think we have found a solution that will work for both RSA and delivery.

E-resources update
Amazon has signed an agreement with DPLA to sell their ebooks to libraries via the DPLA Exchange. This is tremendous news. We are still evaluating the many possible effects this will have on libraries as well as on our ebook program.

We had begun to explore alternatives to Baker and Taylor's Axis 360 platform for ERead but at this point have concluded that Axis 360 is still our best solution. Their services to school libraries, especially the scoping feature that enables school libraries to focus their collections on age appropriate materials and curriculum related materials, are not available through other vendors.

We will now begin an analysis of the effectiveness of Biblioboards as a platform. Leila Heath will be working with Grant and Anna Behm on this study. We want to be sure that we are getting the best value for the taxpayers, of course. Biblioboard materials are also available through the DPLA exchange, so that may be a factor in our deliberations.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

Advocacy issues for the board to promote and support

We have added a new feature for the board, talking points for the Service of the Month. This month that service is Explore More Illinois and the talking points are included in the packet.

As we promised last month, you will see the "megaphone" icon in *This Month at RAILS*, identifying additional advocacy talking points.

IMLS is continuing to have discussions with Congressional members and staff about including libraries in the infrastructure bill that is currently being considered by Congress. There are also ongoing discussions among IMLS and state libraries about funds for libraries.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Certification update

Certification has concluded successfully. We will have a debrief meeting with ISL and IHLS next week and will report to the board on findings.

Continuing education analysis

Joe and Grant have been working on an evaluation of our CE services and programs. We expect the work to be done soon.

Directors University

This program continues to be extremely successful. This year, we have 40 directors attending, almost equally divided between IHLS and RAILS. This number is lower than in previous years because some "new" directors moved from other director positions and had even attended DU previously.

Prepare libraries for the future

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion update

The board EDI committee continues to move forward and subcommittees have identified projects. We will be meeting with Biz next week to discuss the development of a library cohort to be part of our training. Libraries are extremely interested in access to EDI training and we think the cohort is the best methodology to provide the training.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Board election

The Nominating Committee meets on Monday, May 24 to confirm the results of the election and discuss the slate of officers for next year. Kathy Parker, Chair of the Nominating Committee, will attend the board meeting to give a report and answer any questions.

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TO: **RAILS Board of Directors**

FROM: **Deirdre Brennan**

SUBJECT: **Action items from previous meeting and status report**

Calendar update – Per your request, we have added CE related events and other meetings that might be of interest to board members.

FY 2022 budget and operational plan – The budget has been updated to include new information related to both revenues and expenditures. Jim's budget narrative provides an excellent overview, as well as extensive detail, about the budget and its alignment with the strategic plan and ISL priorities.

Also, the Executive Committee met on May 14 to discuss the budget in detail and voted to recommend that the proposed budget be submitted to the full board for approval. In the packet, you will find a memo and steps we will take during FY22 to address the structural deficit. I have not provided a list of possible cuts as was suggested last time, rather, this approach gives us time to identify reductions in expenses, internal restructuring and revenue increases, and then make cuts if necessary.

Strategic planning proposals – We received two additional proposals, one of which was subsequently withdrawn due to timing issues for the consultant, and another that was quite expensive. We believe that Stephanie Chase is the best person to guide our planning work. I have asked her to attend the June board meeting to discuss the process.

Statewide database proposal – The bill has been re-referred to the House Rules committee and appears to be "stuck."

This Month at RAILS – May 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

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

RAILS E-Book Grant Update

RAILS continues to purchase K-12 content for our eRead Illinois Axis 360 shared collection through e-book grant funds awarded by the Illinois State Library (ISL) last fall. The table below shows expenditures as of May 1. We submitted the first Quarterly Financial and Narrative Report to ISL, including a request for reimbursement of First Quarter expenses of $55,609.12.

RAILS is on track to complete spending in June 2021. We continue to receive suggestions for titles to purchase with grant funds; eRead members can make suggestions via this form.

E-Book Grant Purchases as of May 1, 2021

Material Type	Number of Items	Total Expenditures
E-books	2,356	$60,924
Audiobooks	768	$38,762
Totals	**3,124**	**$99,686**

Streamlined eRead Illinois Renewal Process Continues

eRead Illinois Axis 360 renewals continue via a streamlined, automated process. As of May 11, 265 (64%) of participating libraries have renewed. To support this time of increased demand for electronic resources, RAILS is offering complimentary immediate access to new subscribers until the renewal start date of July 1.

📣 RAILS libraries of all types are invited to join eRead Illinois for very affordable access to e-books. It can serve as the library's primary e-book collection, or augment existing e-book collections. For more information on joining and a fee estimate, libraries can visit the eRead website.

E-Resources Networking/Promotional Activities

RAILS hosted an e-content networking meeting on April 26. Libraries discussed OverDrive's recent acquisition of RBDigital's services, including digital magazines. There was also a short discussion of RAILS's OpenGov story about the impact of the pandemic on library e-content usage. RAILS is planning on updating this analysis later this spring.

Leila Heath, Library Resources & Programs Manager, attended the May Electronic Subscription Managers Networking Group meeting to promote RAILS initiatives, including our Vendor

[Privacy Policy Project](#) page and using the "[My Library Is…" campaign](#) website/blog to help promote library e-resources.

Explore More Illinois Update

Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian, was interviewed for a [May 1 article in the *Pekin Times*](#) about [Explore More Illinois](#), our online cultural attractions pass program.

Currently, 352 libraries (301 RAILS libraries and 51 IHLS libraries) participate. RAILS Board members will learn more about the program and how they can promote it to other RAILS libraries during the Service of the Month presentation at the May board meeting.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

Delivery RFP and Timeline

On May 11, RAILS released an [RFP for delivery and sorting services](#). We are seeking proposals from service providers to provide an efficient and cost-effective long-term delivery strategy. A wide variety of options are open for proposals including sorting, delivery, shuttle services, and mail forwarding services. The RFP was created with the assistance of Greg Pronevitz, the consultant RAILS has been working with to help us plan for the future of delivery.

RFP Project Schedule

Date/Time (CST)	Event
May 12, 2021 at noon	Issue RFP
June 3, 2021 at 11 a.m.	Mandatory virtual meeting for potential vendors
June 17, 2021 at 4 p.m.	Accept written questions until this time
June 24, 2021 at 5 p.m.	RAILS responds to final written questions
July 12, 2021 at 5 p.m.	RFP responses due
July 12, 2021 at 5 p.m.	Response opening virtual meeting
August 12, 2021 at 5 p.m.	RAILS staff to review and make recommendation.
August 26, 2021 at 5 p.m.	Delivery staff recommendation
September 2021	Present recommendations to RAILS Board for final action. Contract negotiations begin after approval by the RAILS Board.
To be determined	Implementation planning begins upon contract execution
January 2022	Service start date, subject to negotiation with selected vendor

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

📢 myLIBRO Insights Data Analytics Platform Deal & Lower Pricing for myLIBRO App

The [myLIBRO mobile app](#) helps patrons and students with ILS (integrated library system)

searches, account management, scheduling services, access to digital resources, self-check, and much more. myLIBRO Insights aggregates data collected through the ILS, door counters, resource usage, financial systems, and other datasets, and makes it accessible through a simple request. Think of it like Google or Siri for library data. A myLIBRO demo is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9 at 1 p.m.

📢 OrangeBoy Savannah Discounted Pricing
OrangeBoy Savannah® is a community engagement platform that helps libraries understand customer needs in real-time. The software provides a distinct set of tools to measure library performance, understand and respond to demand for library services, report results to the community, allocate resources, communicate with customers, identify patterns of use, secure feedback, and more. Two webinar demos were held for RAILS members in May.

📢 Barcodes, Inc. Discounted Hardware for Libraries
Barcodes, Inc. curated a custom collection of hardware to meet the specific needs of libraries of all types. Each item listed on the RAILS/Barcodes, Inc. Partner Page is available at a discount for RAILS members. Further discounts may be available for large purchases.

📢 Minitex Products Store Discount
The Minitex Products store offers discounted pricing for Bibliotheca products, as well as other big ticket items. Minitex is a not-for-profit program of the University of Minnesota Libraries and generously extends this discount to libraries nationwide.

📢 RDA Toolkit Group Purchase Renewal
RDA (Resource Description & Access) is an international standard for the creation of library and cultural heritage metadata. RDA Toolkit's subscription-based online platform allows catalogers from all library sizes and types to access RDA's data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating their metadata. A free 30 day trial is available. New sign-ups and renewals for the RAILS group purchase are due by June 1.

Career Online High School (COHS)/Smart Horizons Career Online Education (SHCOE)
RAILS is finalizing the transfer of COHS from Gale to SHCOE. SHCOE, the company that has always handled the educational component of the program, will now take over administrative, financial, and marketing aspects as well. Staff attended COHS training with the new vendor on May 13 and attended a COHS Network Meeting for RAILS/IHLS program participants on May 4.

ConsortiaManager Implementation Continues
RAILS has started gathering data for the migration to ConsortiaManager, an online resource that will help us increase efficiency, capacity, and member communications related to our group purchases. We expect this phase of the project to take several weeks. RAILS will also have access to the Consortia Manager User Group and over 40 other subscribers worldwide.

Sharing Best Practices with Consortia Purchasing Managers Nationwide

Leila Heath, Library Resources and Programs Manager, met with a group of Consortia Purchasing Managers from [Califa (California)](#), [Midwest Collaborative for Library Services](#) (Michigan), [OhioNet](#), and the [Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative](#) on April 22. The group discussed issues and procedures related to purchasing across large, multitype consortia. They plan to meet again in June.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

Strategic Planning for Trustees Event

On May 11, RAILS held a special event for trustees on strategic planning. The event included a short presentation by Greg Pronevitz from Greg Pronevitz Library Consulting. Attendees participated in breakout rooms and had the opportunity to ask questions. The [event was recorded](#) and is available on the RAILS YouTube page.

This is the second trustee networking event RAILS offered in 2021. See attendance statistics below. We are tentatively planning a third event for August on succession planning.

Date	Event	Registrants #	Attendees #
1/20/2021	Trustee Update 2021	206	105
5/13/2021	Strategic Planning for Trustees	85	61

Group Virtual Programming & RAILS FAQ

As more libraries show an interest in partnering on virtual events, a group of RAILS members created the Illinois Joint Library Programming Group to cooperatively offer events for patrons at participating libraries. RAILS has been involved in their discussions, and we [created an FAQ](#) with information on how we can support such collaborative efforts.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story

New My Library Is… Advisory Team Projects

In October 2020, RAILS recruited 11 members from all four library types (academic, public, school, and specialized) to work on a variety of activities related to our [My Library Is…](#)

campaign. The My Library Is… Advisory Team hit the ground running and has been helping us publicize the campaign to other RAILS members ever since.

They recently initiated three new projects:
- Infographics – creating hands-on events to help libraries learn how to produce infographics and use low-cost/free design tools
- Image library – creating a central platform for libraries to upload/download stock images of libraries
- Marketing newsletter – creating a regular newsletter featuring My Library Is… content and marketing tips for libraries

Work on these projects will continue through the summer. A special thank you to Shandi Greve Penrod from the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), who recently started working with the group. We expect to add participants from ILHS member libraries soon.

Advocating for Libraries

May Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, and ILA
RAILS staff meet monthly with staff from AISLE, IHLS, and ILA to discuss shared concerns affecting school libraries across Illinois. Topics discussed at the May 4 meeting included:

- SOPPA (Student Online Personal Protection Act)
- More collaboration around AISLE's Reader's Choice Awards
- Diversity in Literature Bill
- Update on our Statewide Database Proposal
- RAILS EDI Continuing Education Grants
- Collaboration with the RAILS Advocacy Committee around school libraries and academic preparedness for college

The group will meet again on June 1 at 4 p.m.

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service

All RAILS libraries were asked to complete the annual online certification process by May 15. Certification was done via L2 this year, and libraries were also asked to complete the FY 2020 interlibrary loan statistical survey as part of the process.

The table below shows the number of RAILS libraries of all types that completed the entire

process. RAILS will confer with ISL and IHLS on the results of the new certification process, especially in light of the pandemic year.

Library Type	Total #	# Completing Certification
Academic	118	114
Public	412	412
School	558	543
Special	178	159

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

April 27 RAILS Member Update a Success!
Approximately 329 RAILS members attended our April member update, which featured presentations by Greg Pronevitz, delivery consultant, about opportunities to improve delivery service through automation; and Greg McCormick, Illinois State Library Director, about the FY 2022 state budget outlook for libraries and library systems.

There was a lively discussion via Zoom Chat. A recording is available on the RAILS YouTube page if you missed the session.

RAILS Staff at RSA Day
Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist; Dan Bostrom, Member Engagement Manager; Monica Harris, Associate Executive Director; and Robert Morgan, Delivery Services Manager in East Peoria; formed a panel to discuss RAILS services as part of RSA Day on April 22. RSA is one of the six shared online catalogs (LLSAPs) that RAILS helps support.

The panel presented information about a wide variety of RAILS projects/services, including L2, eRead Illinois, our EDI work, and delivery. They received a number of good questions and encouraging comments from attendees.

RAILS Board Calendar of Events

Month	Agenda Items/Topics
January	RAILS Quarterly Consortial Reports
	Filing for SEIs Due – (submit list of those who need to file)
	ALA midwinter meeting (end of January)
	ILA Legislative Meet-ups
February	ILA Legislative Meet-ups
	Appoint Nominating Committee for March Board Election
	Public Library Association (PLA) Annual Conference (end of February)
March	Executive Director evaluation process starts
	SEI notice email from Cook County in March
	ILA Trustee Workshop
April	Draft of System Area and Per Capita Grant Application + List of Membership
	Certification Membership Status Changes (if warranted)
	Notification of All systems Board meeting date
	Board members complete evaluation of Executive Director for May
	Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) – (filed by Board members)
	RAILS Quarterly Consortial Reports
	ILA Reaching Forward Illinois conference
May	Six-Month Review of Closed Session Minutes 5ILCS 120/2(c)(21)
	President or designee compiles Executive Director evaluations for June Meeting
	Approval of APC
June	Plaques: goodbye to retiring and non-returning board members
	Preliminary Board Meeting Fiscal Year Calendar
	Nominating committee presents slate of officers
	Closed session to discuss the findings and recommendations of Executive Director evaluation
	ALA annual conference (end of June)
July	Board Orientation
	RAILS Board Officers Signatures for Bank
	Swearing in of newly elected members with Oath of Office
	Election of Board Officers
	Committee Appointments by new President
	OMA certification for new board members
	Annual filing of conflict of interest form
	RAILS Quarterly Consortial Reports
	Board Meeting Fiscal Year Calendar Approval
August	Review of Annual Report Draft
September	Annual Report Acceptance
	Audit Report Acceptance
October	RAILS Quarterly Consortial Reports
	ILA annual conference
November	Six-Month Review of Closed Session Minutes 5ILCS 120/2(c)(21)
December	Meeting is dependent upon calendar approved in July