

11 June 2021

**TO: RAILS Board of Directors**

**FROM: Deirdre Brennan**

**SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – May, 2021**

As I write this report, it has not even been two weeks since we met on May 28, so my report is shorter than usual.

**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**

Julie Tappendorf's mask/vaccine [FAQ](#) has been of great interest and help to members. More than 367 people viewed the FAQ via the *E-News*; it was even ahead of *Library Jobs* views for awhile!

We will be bringing a mask/vaccine policy for RAILS staff when in the office, to the Policy Committee on June 17, and this will also be discussed at the board meeting on June 18.

#### **East Peoria buildings update**

We continue to be on track with our move to Sabrina Drive on June 26 in East Peoria. We will have further information at the board meeting.

#### **Universal Service Committee**

The Committee had an excellent meeting on Thursday, June 10. The discussion ranged from an update on the status of the administrative rules for the Cards for Kids Act; the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules is set to meet on July 13. Greg McCormick also reported that a new bill has been filed related to the statewide database proposal; [House Bill 4092](#) amends the purpose of the State Library to include provision of electronic resources to residents. This is a very interesting development that we hope to have more information about at the meeting.

The main topic of conversation was about strategy to advance universal service statewide. This topic is on the board agenda to discuss; the committee asked that the RAILS board pass a resolution or make a statement calling for statewide collaboration and action

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

### Podcasts

I have done 3 podcasts this past month, two with My Library Is grant winners and one with the Highwood Public Library Director, Carmen Patlan. Carman worked at the Waukegan Public Library and led their initiative that resulted in their winning a National Leadership Medal from IMLS a few years ago. Now, Highwood Public Library has also won the IMLS Medal for their work with their community, a project called [BREAK](#), Bridging Resources, Education and Access to Knowledge. It is absolutely remarkable what this library has done for this community of 5,400 residents, more than half of whom speak a language other than English at home and identify as Hispanic or Latino, and with an annual budget of only \$250,000. It is truly a lesson in the value of a library to a community and shows that small libraries can be mighty in the ways they respond to and serve their community.

## 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. The committee is meeting next week.

Biz is also actively engaged with the board EDI committee, providing training for members of the committee and helping to craft subcommittee projects to achieve both short and long term goals.

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

### **Board election**

Kathy Parker will present the proposed slate of officers on behalf of the Nominating Committee at the June board meeting. The election will be held at the July meeting.

### **Board committees**

Every year, after the new board is seated, we reorganize our committees. Since we lost 4 incumbents this year, there will be quite a bit of change to committee membership. At the July board meeting, we will include discussion of the committees and committee charges to aid all board members in making decisions about committee membership.

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

Board visibility – The board had a robust discussion at the last meeting of ways to increase member awareness and understanding of the work of the RAILS board. Suggestions included presentations at Member Updates and networking group meetings. One of the goals of the increased visibility is to encourage participation in the annual board election. RAILS staff will discuss this issue in more detail and come up with a proposed plan for the board at the July meeting. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and strategic planning process will also offer opportunities for greater board visibility.

Strategic planning - Stephanie Chase will attend the July board meeting (via Zoom) to introduce herself and give an overview of the planning process.

Budget plan – Jim has updated his expenditure projections for this fiscal year and he will report at the board meeting. We are submitting two grant applications to the state library, which will enable us to receive reimbursement for both the L2 support and world languages cataloging, for approximately \$120,000.

Monica and I are working with Jim Kregor to completely understand the work flow and work load in the Finance and HR Department so that we can make recommendations for moving forward on restructuring.

## This Month at RAILS – June 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

##### **RAILS Awards Grants to Help Libraries Join Consortia**

RAILS offers [Catalog Membership Grants](#) to help fund startup costs for any RAILS member that isn't currently a member of a RAILS-supported [shared catalog](#) or LLSAP. RAILS LLSAPs are: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RRLC, RSA-NFP, and SWAN.

Congratulations to these recent grant awardees:

- Amboy SD 272, \$15,505 to join RRLC (Rock River Library Consortium)
- Marengo-Union Public Library District, \$7,435 to join PrairieCat
- Regional Center for Change (a new RAILS member), \$7,140 to join RRLC

#### 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. At the time of this writing, we have spent 97% of the total \$125,000 award, and expect to finish purchasing grant materials by June 11. RAILS received over 100 suggestions from members during the grant period, and added most of these items to the eRead collection.

##### **E-Book Grant Purchases as of May 31, 2021**

Material Type	Number of Items	Total Expenditures
E-books	2,788	\$74,102
Audiobooks	928	\$46,967
<b>Totals</b>	3,716	\$121,069

The next phase of the project will focus on the evaluation and use of these collections.

##### **RAILS E-Resources Usage Statistics**

The following tables show usage of eRead Illinois and the BiblioBoard Library in May and for FY 2021 (through May).

### eRead Illinois Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
May 2021	27,316	16,158	43,474
Fiscal Year to Date	316,965	171,917	488,882

### BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
May 2021	3,526
Fiscal Year to Date	23,305

The BiblioBoard Library collection had the highest number of views in one month in May 2021. As is the case with most spikes in BiblioBoard usage, most views were of a single collection, “Lockport Township High School Yearbooks.” About one third (996) of the total number of views for the month of May took place on Friday, May 14.

For the entire month of May, the yearbooks represent over 2,000 of the total views, and most of these views came from two locations – Lockport and Chicago. Typically, when we see spikes in views like this, the majority of usage is limited to one or two locations over a short period of time.

### eRead Illinois Renewal Period Continues

As of June 3, 309 (76%) libraries renewed their eRead Illinois membership (not including RSA subscribers). Final renewal notices are going out this month, and the renewal period will conclude on June 30.

### RAILS at Virtual Digital Literacy Conference

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, presented “E-Content Resources from the Reaching Across Illinois Library System” at the [Digital Literacy Conference](#) on June 4. The conference was targeted at K12 educators and administrators, and Anna’s presentation focused on RAILS e-resources for school libraries, including [eRead Illinois](#), the [BiblioBoard Library](#), and [inkie.org](#).

### Explore More Illinois Update



Jessica Barnes, RAILS Special Projects Librarian, hosted an [Explore More Illinois](#) webinar on May 18. She reviewed the public site, the website, and the statistics dashboard. Over 60 signed up and 31 people attended. A [recording is available](#) on the Explore More website.

In other news, we are focusing on reaching out to more attractions as state COVID restrictions lift. As of June 2, 365 libraries (301 RAILS libraries and 64 IHLS libraries) have joined Explore More Illinois. We are also investigating the possibility of adding community colleges.

## Improving Physical Delivery Services

### RAILS Delivery RFP Process Continues

We continue to move forward with our [Delivery RFP](#). There was a mandatory meeting for interested vendors on June 3, and representatives from 10 different organizations attended. We do not yet know how many vendors will submit a proposal. Response thus far has been positive, and similar to expectations given the specialized nature of our delivery services.

## Providing Greater Purchasing Power

### IT Product Discounts and Purchasing

In response to an inquiry from a member library, RAILS has been exploring the viability of IT-related discounts. Last month, we told you about two recent offers for the [Minitex Products Store](#) and [Barcodes, Inc.](#) RAILS Information Technology Manager Wesley Smith also hosted an IT Purchasing in Libraries Discussion on June 16 to learn more about our members IT hardware and software purchasing needs and experiences.



### Gale Database Package Deal

RAILS member libraries are eligible to purchase a [Gale database package](#) at discounted rates. The package includes In Context Elementary, In Context Global Issues, Gale Health and Wellness, and more.

### Career Online High School Update

RAILS completed the switchover of Career Online High School from Gale to Smart Horizons. The new [RAILS/COHS marketing site](#) includes more details about the program. Updated print and online marketing materials will be sent to all participating libraries soon. Most individual library sites have launched and staff are trained. We will schedule the next RAILS/COHS Networking Meeting for some time in July.

## Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking



### RAILS Online Roundtable: "Tips for Makerspaces," August 20

Members of the [RAILS Makerspace Networking Group](#) will host an [online roundtable](#) on Friday, August 20 from 10-11 a.m. Staff members from any Illinois library are invited to attend, especially school and public library staff interested in starting a new makerspace. The event will feature a Q&A and time for peer-to-peer discussion.

## RAILS at 2021 SLA Midwest Symposium



Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, served on the planning team and Grant Halter, RAILS Data Analyst, was a presenter at the June 4 Special Library Association [Midwest Symposium](#). Four Midwest SLA communities co-hosted the event: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan.

Fifty-eight people registered for the symposium, which included presentations by Tara Murray Grove, current SLA President, and Miguel Figueroa, CEO/ President of Amigos Library Services.

## Telling the Library Story

### Helping Members Tell Their Story



### RAILS Launches My Library Is... Newsletter

RAILS encourages anyone interested in telling their library story more effectively or proving their value to different stakeholders to subscribe to our new *My Library Is...* newsletter. It includes links to blog posts, templates, and other resources, and will arrive via email the first Monday of every month. [Subscribe here](#).

The first edition is [now live](#). Inside, you'll find links to recent blog posts about:

- Library partnerships
- What is means to be a library marketer
- Creating a podcast to tell the library story
- The value of library marketing plans
- And much more!

Thank you to the members of the My Library Is... Advisory Team for their help on this project and for continuing to help us grow our [My Library Is... campaign](#)!

### Advocating for Libraries

#### June Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, and ILA

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



- SOPPA (Student Online Personal Protection Act)
- Reader's Choice Awards
- School feedback on My Library Is.. campaign and upcoming survey for schools
- K-12 purchasing procedures and potential K-12 discounts
- EDI program collaboration
- Collaboration with RAILS Advocacy Committee around school libraries and academic preparedness for college
- Recap of AISLE partnership activities from the past year

The group will meet again on July 6. The RAILS Board will hear more about the AISLE partnership at the June 18 board meeting. (Board members asked to hear more about the partnership via our recent board engagement survey.)

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

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



#### **RAILS Disaster Planning Training Available Online through May 2022**

On May 26, staff from [LYRASIS](#) presented the “Disaster Planning: Getting Started” webinar, and provided an overview of different steps libraries can take to be better prepared for a disaster of any size. Topics included risk assessment and mitigation, creating a disaster plan, collection salvage procedures, techniques for training staff, and creating emergency response networks.

The session was recorded and is [available to RAILS members](#) through May 2022. It will help address standards outlined in *Serving Our Public 4.0* and the requirements of the Public Library Per Capita Grant.

### **Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service**



#### **ILA's ARPA Funding for Illinois Libraries Available on RAILS Pulse Page**

The Illinois Library Association released an [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Funding for Illinois Libraries](#) guide with information on several federal funding opportunities for Illinois libraries. ILA will update this resource as more information becomes available. The guide is also available via RAILS' [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#).

## Developing Library Leaders

### 2021 Statewide Directors University Initiative Begins



Directors University (DU) is a joint project of RAILS, IHLS, ILA, and the Illinois State Library. This traditionally in-person, annual event provides training and networking opportunities for first-time or new-to-Illinois public library directors. The event is once again virtual in 2021.

DU began on June 4 with 42 participants from across the state.

Presentations and small group discussions will continue weekly throughout the summer with the final session scheduled for October 8, 2021. New this year, with input from the RAILS Board ED Committee, is a directive to all presenters to incorporate principles of EDI into their content.

## Preparing Libraries for the Future

### Helping Libraries Respond to Change

#### RAILS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Training Grants Update

RAILS received seven applications for our [EDI Training Event Grants](#). These grants support training events for library staff that promote education and meaningful dialogue related to EDI. We're very pleased with the variety of proposed topics, including collection development practices, implicit bias training, fundamentals of web accessibility, being an ally for marginalized groups, and rooting library practices in a foundation of equity.

As is required for these grants, all events will be available for RAILS member staff to attend and we will promote them through our regular channels. Grant awards will be distributed later in June with events beginning in the fall of 2021.

#### RAILS Internal Workplace Climate Team Update

The RAILS Climate Team has transitioned to the planning phase of their work over the past two months. Current projects include building an inventory of our various partners/vendors and identifying how they align with EDI principles, researching EDI cohort models of training for our membership, and creating a more robust board recruitment process.

## ***Aiming to Be the Best Library System***

### **Member Communication/Engagement**



#### **Learn More about RAILS via Our New Video Series**

In May, RAILS began creating a series of short orientation videos for staff from member libraries of all types to help address common questions and areas of interest. Video topics will include:

- What is RAILS?
- Creating/Updating Your L2 account
- Subscribing/Reading the *RAILS E-News*
- Subscribing/Participating in RAILS Email Lists
- Finding/Joining a Networking Group
- Getting Help from RAILS
- Is My Library a RAILS Member?

RAILS staff will record the videos and they will reside on the RAILS YouTube page. Watch for more information in upcoming issues of the weekly *RAILS E-News*.

### **RAILS Staff News**

#### **RAILS Staff Member Receives Scholarship to Virtual Technical Services Conference**

Nincy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, received one of two [diversity scholarships](#) to attend the 2020/2021 Ohio Valley Group of Technical Services Librarians Annual Conference (virtual) in early June. The scholarship covered full conference registration and Nincy was acknowledged during the annual business meeting.

#### **Recent Training Sessions for RAILS Staff**

RAILS staff had the opportunity to participate in two different staff training events over the past month. Lynn Hoffman from the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey presented “Work Connections at a Distance.” This webinar focused on the challenges of remote work and strategies for working successfully and minimizing Zoom burnout. John Newton of JNA & Associates delivered a two-part training for RAILS managers that covered emotional intelligence, managing difficult conversations, and navigating through corrective actions.