

23 July 2021

**TO: RAILS Board of Directors**

**FROM: Deirdre Brennan**

**SUBJECT: Board visibility plan**

At the May meeting of the RAILS board, a discussion of the low voter turnout at the recent board election led to discussion about how to increase board visibility to increase member awareness of board responsibilities and activities which would then, hopefully, increase voter turnout at elections. RAILS staff have discussed some possible activities or events that we think will be helpful in an overall way to emphasize and explain the role and importance of the board and member awareness of their important role in both serving as and electing board members.

1. Spearhead establishment of Trustees University

Public library directors and trustees are very aware of the need for more training for trustees, especially new trustees. RAILS board sponsorship of a virtual training program for new trustees, along the lines of the very successful Directors University, would be an excellent project to take on, especially in collaboration with ISL, IHLS and ILA. We all share an interest in enhancing training for trustees.

2. Meet the board events

RAILS staff think it will be very helpful to “put a face with a name” for members to have greater knowledge of board members and what they do. We could do a number of events or activities in this area including highlighting board members in the E-News, having a meet-and-greet at conferences, zoom events with networking groups, and events during the annual election that will enable board candidates to speak directly to members and voters. It is always highly desirable for board members to attend networking group meetings, member updates and other meetings scheduled around our service area, including traveling to other locations for RAILS board meetings.

3. Talking points

RAILS staff, specifically Mary Witt, regularly provide talking points about RAILS activities and about member libraries. We will highlight these in each board packet.

#### 4. Social media activity

RAILS staff are very active on social media, and we “meet” many of our members there. We could facilitate board member activities and presence on social media.

#### 5. Board makeup

Ultimately, the makeup of the RAILS board is also an issue that we should examine to increase participation. The requirement that the majority of the board be made up of public library trustees is certainly a deterrent having a more diverse candidate pool, and greater representation among all types of libraries.