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23 July 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Action items from previous meeting and status report

Board visibility – As discussed at the June meeting, I have included a draft visibility plan for the board. This plan is a result of a discussion of ways to increase member awareness and understanding of the work of the RAILS board.

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

Universal Service Committee request for RAILS board statement – The committee met in June and discussed the need for a statewide strategy and collaboration to make more progress on achieving universal service. This item was on the agenda in June, but was deferred to the July board meeting so that Greg McCormick could be part of the discussion. Greg is also not available for this meeting, but I have drafted up some thoughts for the board to discuss.

23 July 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – July, 2021

Welcome to our continuing and new board members! I look forward to working with you during this upcoming year. With our tenth anniversary and a new strategic plan to develop, it will certainly be very interesting and fulfilling.

Our monthly reports are organized by the goals of our current strategic plan, to make it easier for the board and members to see progress.

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

Resource sharing

Resource sharing is one of the main jobs of a multitype library system according to the [Illinois Library System Act](#) which you can read here. We will also talk about this at the board orientation. Many of the goals of our strategic plan relate to resource sharing.

Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award

We are absolutely thrilled to have received this [award](#) from the Illinois Library Association. We were completely surprised by the nomination which came from a staff member at a library. As you can see from the explanation of the award, it is very focused on resource sharing. It is truly a great honor and a tribute to the entire RAILS team, board and staff.

Universal Service

Extension of public library service to unserved residents is specifically mentioned in the System Act as a system responsibility. The Board established a Universal Service Committee 3 years ago to support this work. At the Universal Service Committee in June, the committee asked the board to make a statement about the importance of statewide collaboration and leadership for universal service. We will discuss this at the board meeting.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

My Library Is...

During our last strategic planning process, we heard loud and clear from libraries that they need our help telling the “library story,” explaining the value of libraries to their communities and funders. As a result, we started the [My Library Is](#) project. This has been a very important and popular endeavor over the past couple of years.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Consulting, continuing education services

We provide a diverse array of training and consulting services for our member libraries, and some we provide for the entire state, including trustee training and the FOIA/OMA hotline. Right now, we are analyzing how and when to return to in-person training.

Prepare libraries for the future

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion update

The board established an EDI committee in 2020. There are board member representatives as well as member library staff. The committee has divided into subcommittees in order to work on a few priorities; hiring, programming and training. We work with a consultant Elizabeth Lindsay Ryan. Biz has also been actively engaged with training for the RAILS staff to improve our internal culture.

Trend spotting

One of the requests we received during our last planning process was that RAILS provide leadership, such as in the EDI area, but also to be on the lookout for trends. Part of our work in this area includes monthly podcasts where I talk with leaders and innovators in the library field about what we should be on watch for.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Recruitment of new RAILS Director of Finance

Jim Kregor is retiring in January of 2022. We have started putting together the job description and posting for this important recruitment. We are hoping to recruit a diverse and competitive pool. I expect the job will be posted in August and we will begin interviews in the fall.

As a result of Jim's retirement, we have made some internal organizational changes. The Human Resources staff had reported to Jim but we are changing that to report to Monica Harris. This will enable Jim to focus on wrapping up his work and will, hopefully, make it easier to recruit a talented applicant pool. As you can imagine, there is a lot of demand in the marketplace for these jobs.

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.

Strategic plan and Tenth Anniversary Celebration

We are very excited to work on both of these projects. We will have a discussion at the meeting about board involvement in the planning process and an update on anniversary events and ideas.

This Month at RAILS – July 2021

Spread the Word: The Top Three

The results of our February 2021 RAILS Board Communication & Engagement survey showed that board members would like help identifying current RAILS offerings they can promote to library staff and trustees to fulfill their role as RAILS ambassadors. Each month, we will provide brief talking points for select This Month at RAILS items to help you spread the word. Here is this month's top three:

"Succession Planning for Trustees" RAILS Online Roundtable

All RAILS public library trustees are invited to the "Succession Planning for Trustees" roundtable via Zoom on Wednesday, August 11 from noon – 1 p.m. The event will feature a short presentation and an opportunity to connect with other RAILS library trustees. [More information is available on L2.](#)

Take the #FundLibraries Challenge

RAILS invites all Illinois libraries to show their support for libraries and library advocacy by building something inspiring using books, posting their creation on social media using the hashtag #FundLibraries, and tagging three other libraries and encouraging them to post something as well. Share your submission by Labor Day, September 6. See more details in this My Library Is... [blog entry](#).

RAILS Can Save Your Library Money!

RAILS negotiates special deeply discounted rates for member libraries of all types on a wide variety of products. RAILS members saved over \$1M via these offers in FY 2021. View the complete list on the [Deals & Discounts](#) page on the RAILS website. You can also search for offers by library type.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

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

Use of RAILS E-Resources

RAILS' [eRead Illinois](#) Axis 360 collection includes e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and children with very reasonable pricing. The [BiblioBoard Library](#) is available to everyone in Illinois, courtesy of RAILS, regardless of whether they have a library card. Items on this platform have no holds, no waits, and can be accessed simultaneously.

The following tables show usage of eRead Illinois and the BiblioBoard Library in June and for FY 2021.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
June 2021	19,647	13,922	33,569
FY 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021)	335,986	185,628	521,614

BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
June 2021	2,157
FY 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021)	25,462

eRead Illinois Renewals/Enrollment

The eRead Illinois renewal/enrollment period concluded in June, with 972 libraries subscribing for FY 2022. A total of 694 schools (buildings), 249 public, 23 academic, and six specialized libraries are taking advantage of the very affordable collection of over 56,000 e-book and e-audiobooks for all ages.

eRead Illinois Grant Update

RAILS received a \$125,000 [e-book grant](#) from the Illinois State Library last fall to purchase K-12 content for our eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection. Grant spending ended in June. The following table shows total grant purchases.

E-Book Grant Purchases

Material Type	Number of Items	Total Expenditures
E-books	2,822	\$75,985
Audiobooks	934	\$49,015
Totals	3,756	\$125,000

Purchases included items chosen by Baker & Taylor's collection specialists and additional copies of popular materials. RAILS received 121 suggestions from member libraries and most of those items were added as well.

Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' online cultural pass program. Cardholders at participating Illinois



public libraries can take advantage of discounts at museums, park districts, historical societies, zoos, arts centers, recreational facilities, and other attractions. As of July 8, 372 libraries (306 RAILS libraries and 66 Illinois

Heartland Library System libraries) participate.

RAILS continues to recruit new attractions for the program and to restart offers with attractions that have reopened with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. As of July 8, 20 attractions participate.

RAILS staff met with CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) staff on July 8 to discuss the implications of expanding Explore More Illinois to community colleges using ALMA, CARLI's ILS (integrated library system). We are planning a follow-up meeting for August.

Improving Physical Delivery Services

RAILS Delivery RFP Update

In May, RAILS released an RFP for delivery and sorting services. Submissions were due on July 12, and RAILS hosted a bid opening at 5 p.m. on that day. We received four proposals from: Tech Logic, Lyngsoe Systems, Continental Transportation Solutions, and statcourier.

RAILS staff will review the proposals and make a recommendation to the RAILS Board at the September 24 board meeting. Contract negotiations will begin following board approval.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

RAILS Deals & Discount Result in Big Savings for Member Libraries

RAILS partners with vendors to offer special, deeply discounted rates for RAILS member libraries. These discounts resulted in over \$1 million in savings for members in FY 2021.

EBSCO deals saved 120 libraries over \$500,000. Other impactful deals included Communico, OpenGov, PatronPoint, PressReader, Quill, and Swank Movie Licensing, which combined for over \$300,000 in savings for participating libraries. Discounts are also available for items purchased through participating library supply catalogs. We will continue to work with vendors

and our members to provide advantageous, consistent, and transparent pricing for RAILS libraries.

RAILS members can find more information and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the RAILS [Deals & Discounts](#) page.

Career Online High School (COHS) Update

[COHS](#) is a vocation-based high school completion program that enables libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas.

RAILS staff attended a Rockford Public Library COHS graduation on June 24. Twelve students received diplomas. In total, 125 adult Illinois students have earned a high school diploma via the COHS program.

RAILS also hosted two COHS networking group meeting for members on July 13. Six attended.



Sharing Best Practices with Consortia Purchasing Managers Nationwide

Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources and Programs, met with Consortia Purchasing Managers from [Califa](#) (California), [Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative](#), [Midwest Collaborative for Library Services](#) (MCLS), and [OhioNet](#) in June. The group discussed issues and procedures related to purchasing across large, multitype consortia. The group meets bi-monthly.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

RAILS Online Roundtable: "Succession Planning for Trustees," August 11

RAILS is holding an event specifically designed for library trustees on Wednesday, August 11 from noon to 1 p.m. It will include a short presentation by Amanda Standerfer, Independent Consultant with Standerfer Consulting/Fast Forward Libraries, and a Zoom breakout room with the opportunity to connect with other RAILS library trustees. There will also be a Q&A, and a portion of the program will be recorded.

All RAILS public library trustees are invited! [More information/registration.](#)

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



#FundLibraries Challenge

RAILS invites all Illinois libraries to participate in a social media challenge to show support for libraries and library advocacy. Libraries are asked to build something inspiring from books, post their creation to social media using the hashtag #FundLibraries, and tag three other libraries and encourage them to build something as well. Libraries can also participate by contacting their legislators to let them know how vital libraries are to their community. As of July 19, 12 libraries shared their creations (see examples below). See more details in this [My Library Is... blog entry](#).



Morton Public Library created a pumpkin because Morton is the Pumpkin Capital of the World!



Peoria Public Library created a bulldozer to celebrate the role Caterpillar plays in their community.

My Library Is... Online Roundtable on "Canva for Libraries"

RAILS held an online roundtable for Illinois library marketing staff on July 20 with hands-on tips for using the free version of the Canva graphic design platform. The 66 participants also had time to create and showcase their own Canva creations. The [event was recorded](#).

My Library Is... Online Roundtable: "Adobe Suite for Libraries," August 3

On Tuesday, August 3 from 2 to 3 p.m., RAILS will host an online roundtable via Zoom for all Illinois library staff. The event will include a live tutorial on using Adobe products like InDesign and Photoshop to create quick, easy graphics. It will also be recorded. There were 39 registrants at the time of this writing.

Advocating for Libraries

July Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, and ILA Focuses on Data

RAILS staff meet monthly with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), and the Illinois Library Association (ILS) to discuss shared concerns affecting school libraries.

The July 6 meeting focused on existing data on Illinois school libraries and how we might acquire additional data to better understand the school library landscape. Patricia Burg, Library Program Specialist at the Illinois State Library, joined us for this conversation. The next “AISLE Partnership” meeting is on August 10.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

RAILS Awards Seven EDI Training Grants

RAILS offers Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion [Training Grants](#) to help libraries, networking groups, and consortia plan training events for library staff and/or board members. We recently selected seven organizations to receive grants, with their training events to take place this fall on topics including collection development, web accessibility, and implicit bias. All RAILS members will be invited to attend. Watch upcoming issues of *RAILS E-News* for details.

Congratulations to our grant recipients!

- Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)
- Mount Prospect Public Library
- Orland Park Public Library
- Peoria Public Library
- Prairie Trails Public Library
- System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)
- Warren-Newport Public Library District

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Modeling Best Practices & Innovation

SimplyE Update

[SimplyE](#) is an open source e-reader and e-book discovery app developed by the New York Public Library (NYPL). It allows patrons of libraries with multiple e-book collections to access all of these collections through one interface. RAILS has been closely monitoring SimplyE's progress, including attending monthly meetings to discuss technical issues and other developments. The [Pinnacle Library Cooperative](#) test-piloted SimplyE and assisted with trouble-shooting.

The SimplyE project has been plagued with app development issues. Moving forward, NYPL will retain the SimplyE brand, and concentrate on app stability, particularly within its own library network. [LYRISIS](#) will continue developing the concept through [The Palace Project](#), which plans to launch in fall 2021. While neither SimplyE nor The Palace Project are ready for widespread deployment at RAILS, we will continue to stay abreast of ongoing developments as these interfaces promise to ultimately provide a better user experience for library patrons.

RAILS Staff News

American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference Report

Several RAILS staff members attended the June 24 – 29 ALA virtual conference. There were many informative sessions on current topics such as navigating librarianship through COVID-19 and looking at improving the organizational health of library organizations through an EDI lens, as well as meetings of the E-Books Interest Group and the Consortium Management Interest Group.

Monica Harris, RAILS Associate Executive Director, is an ALA At-Large Councilor. Key Council discussions at the conference focused on ALA's [Forward Together](#) governance recommendations, the association's budget, a resolution in support of open educational resources (OER), Library of Congress subject headings, and patron privacy. The Council will resume in-person meetings mixed with a virtual hybrid approach, at the [LibLearnX](#) ALA Conference in San Antonio, Texas from January 20 – 24, 2022.

RAILS Board Calendar of Events

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<https://librarylearning.org/events>

Month	Agenda Items/Topics
January	RAILS Quarterly Consortial Reports
	Filing for SEIs Due – (admin staff -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