



20 August 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Monica Harris, Associate Executive Director

SUBJECT: Action items from previous meeting and status report

Board Visibility

Included in your August packet is a set of talking points related to the Service of the Month Report on Delivery. These talking points are intended to create a great jumping off point for discussing the Service of the Month with RAILS member library trustees and library staff. You will receive these talking points each month as part of your packet.

There was a request at the July meeting to receive lists of RAILS member libraries by type. You can access these lists via the L2 (Library Directory & Learning Calendar) Member Directory (<https://librarylearning.org/directory>). Choose the dropdown of 'Library Type' or the search of your choice to display these lists.

Strategic Planning

Constructive Disruption consultant Cindy Fesemyer will attend the August board meeting (via Zoom) to conduct a discussion for the board related to the strategic plan. This month's discussion will focus on the question: **What have we done in the past, or are we currently doing that most helps our member libraries?**

More information about the August discussion as well as additional information about the process is available in your packet within the strategic planning memo.

20 August 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Monica Harris

SUBJECT: Associate Executive Director Report – August, 2021

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

Increase in Per Capita Grants

The School District Library Grant provides supplementary support for the school district's library media program to enhance student learning and academics. Grant funds are typically used for the acquisition of library materials to support reading for academics and enjoyment, library subscriptions to electronic resources, or library-based technology to support student research. Public Act 102-0039 allowed for increased funding starting in FY 2021. The rate per pupil has been increased from \$0.75 to \$0.885 per student of schools with a qualified school library. The minimum award increased from \$750 to \$850.

The Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Aid Grant was established to assist public libraries to improve and increase library services within their service areas. Effective with the FY 2021 grants, the per capita rate increased from \$1.25 to \$1.475.

Census

Overall Illinois lost population of about 18,000 in the 2020 Census count, counts by county shows modest gains in population in the RAILS Service area. Most of the growth was observed in the collar counties of Chicago, where the RAILS Census grant was focused. The City of Chicago also experienced significant growth.

In October 2019 RAILS received a \$750,000 grant from the Pritzker Administration and the Illinois Department of Human Services to encourage full participation in the Census 2020, especially with

historically Hard-to-Count communities. That work was focused in the Collar Counties region, including DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties.

Delivery RFP

RAILS is currently working with Delivery Consultant Greg Pronevitz on an RFP to provide library sorting and delivery service. Proposals that applied library and logistics industry standard best practices to enhance library delivery service were sought. Four proposals were received by the deadline in July 2021. Throughout August, RAILS staff have been reviewing the RFPs received and plan to bring the results of that review to the board at the September meeting.

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 three years ago to support this work. RAILS recently met with representatives from the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Heartland Library System to discuss the recently released FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on nonresidents. This FAQ also discusses questions related to Cards for Kids and Veterans cards legislative updates. Greg McCormick, Director of the Illinois State Library, will join us at the August meeting with updates from the ISL. The next Universal Service Committee meeting will be on September 9th at 1pm.

Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story

AISLE Partnership and School Data

Our ongoing monthly meetings and partnership with AISLE (Association of Illinois School Library Educators), IHLS (Illinois Heartland Library System), and ILA (Illinois Library Association) have resulted in some wonderful innovations and developments that can help all of us to serve Illinois school libraries better. We are currently focused on how to get better clarity around providing better school library data in Illinois. Recently, school library data specialist Keith Curry Lance reported that of the 480 school districts missing data in his national reporting, 400 of them were located in Illinois. Pat Burg, Library Program Specialist from the Illinois State Library has also joined the group for its last two discussions about this important topic. RAILS continues its efforts to refine the current available data, and AISLE is currently preparing letters to ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) to bring more light to this issue.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Masking Procedures and In-Person Training at RAILS

Due to increasing rates of COVID-19 in the RAILS service area and the highly contagious Delta variant, RAILS recently adjusted masking and temperature procedures for staff in all of our service centers. All staff, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear a mask in all common areas and in meetings. All staff, regardless of vaccination status, will also be required to check their temperature upon entrance to the building, and follow the temperature procedures as directed. Our hope is that these changes will not be required indefinitely, but out of an abundance of caution, we are asking all staff to adhere to these masking and temperature procedures.

Due to limited space and the need to social distance in order to abide by the safety guidelines for the ongoing pandemic, large scale in-person training is not currently an option at our RAILS locations. A vast array of virtual CE and networking events has been ongoing, and continues to be well attended by members. In many cases (as with Trustee events and those focused on school libraries) virtual meetings have offered options that were previously unavailable due to schedule and travel restrictions. Limited spaces also means that we can accommodate many more attendees in our trainings virtually, which results in a better return on investment for members and the ability to offer training to more individuals. Many of our consultants providing training also have restrictions regarding in person trainings at this time.

There are some cases in which in person meetings are the best option for learning. RAILS has continued to offer one-on-one trainings where it can be offered safely, and staff continue to attend board meetings and offer in person consulting where needed. Our hope is to return to more large scale in person trainings when it is safe and logical to do so.

Prepare libraries for the future

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Update

The Board EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) committee and Climate Team are continuing our work throughout RAILS. The subcommittees are at work on their projects, with updates expected from each committee at the September 14 meeting. More EDI-focused training and advocacy have been requested for future meetings. The RAILS Climate Team will meet again in September. The next RAILS All Staff EDI trainings are being scheduled for this fall. Consultant Elizabeth Lindsay Ryan has been engaged in all of these current efforts.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Remote Board Meetings

As COVID case counts rise, there is a lot of discussion among public bodies about whether to approach public meetings remotely. RAILS would like to recommend that we offer a remote meeting possibility for Board meetings and Board Committee meetings as long as it remains an option to do so, in order to accommodate the diverse needs of our Board Committee members. On Tuesday, August 10th Ancel Glink’s Municipal Minute released a FAQ for conducting remote meetings at this stage of the pandemic (<http://municipalminute.ancelglink.com/2021/08/faq-for-conducting-remote-meetings.html>) This FAQ highlights the need to monitor the Governor’s statewide disaster declaration monthly so that the public body can best make a determination whether it is not practical or prudent to hold an fully in-person meeting. Hybrid options will remain available as long as we can safely do so.

Strategic plan and Tenth Anniversary Celebration

The work on these exciting projects continues. Please see the memo dedicated to the strategic plan for more details this month.



Looking Forward to the September Board Meeting

Service of the Month – LLSAPS: What They Are and How RAILS Supports Them

Board Development Topic – How RAILS Board Members Can Take Advantage of L2

This Month at RAILS – August 2021

Spread the Word: The Top Three

In response to board member feedback, each month, we will provide brief talking points on select This Month at RAILS items to help you spread the word about our programs/services. Here are this month's top three:

Grants Available to Join a RAILS Shared Online Catalog

No one library is able to provide all the materials its patrons need. If you participate in a RAILS shared online catalog (or LLSAP), your patrons have easy access to the resources from many libraries – all in one place. Also, the costs for an individual library to make its collection available online are high. Joining a shared online catalog is more affordable because members share expenses.

RAILS also offers [Catalog Membership Grants](#) to help fund start-up costs. The next application deadline is October 15. Read more about it on the RAILS website.

Opportunity for All Connected with School Libraries to Learn about System E-Resources

RAILS, IHLS, and AISLE are offering the Zoom webinar, [System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators](#)," on September 23 at 4 p.m. Library assistants, library media specialists, classroom teachers, technology coordinators, and school administrators are encouraged to attend to learn how system e-book programs, vendor discounts, networking events, and other services can benefit them.

New Vaccine Education Toolkit on RAILS COVID-19 Pulse Page

RAILS created a [Vaccine Education Toolkit](#) with flyers, posters, sample social media posts, videos, and fact sheets that libraries can reproduce to educate their communities about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

There is a link to the toolkit on the [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#) on the RAILS website. This page also includes the latest news on COVID-19, including what different libraries are doing to serve their communities during the pandemic.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing

Grant Funding for Joining a Shared Catalog

RAILS offers [Catalog Membership Grants](#) to offset the one-time expenses associated with joining a RAILS LLSAP or shared online catalog consortium. RAILS LLSAPs are CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RRLC, RSA-NFP, and SWAN. The first application deadline for FY 2022 is October 15, 2021. The grant application and more information is available on the RAILS website.

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

"System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators," September 23

RAILS is partnering with [IHLS](#) and [AISLE](#) to offer "[System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators](#)," on September 23 at 4 p.m. RAILS and IHLS staff will discuss services we offer to schools, including e-book/e-audiobook programs, vendor discounts, networking events, and more. Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources and Programs, and Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, will represent RAILS. The session is geared at library assistants, library media specialists, classroom teachers, technology coordinators, and school administrators.

RAILS Continues to Enhance eRead Illinois K – 12 Content

RAILS received positive anecdotal feedback about the impact of the \$125,000 e-book grant we received from the Illinois State Library in 2020 to purchase K-12 content for our [eRead Illinois](#) Axis 360 collection. Grant spending ended in June. Several school librarians commented on the quality of the collection throughout the spring.

RAILS purchases items for our eRead collection weekly, and we will continue to include more popular K-12 titles to accommodate demand.

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 use of eRead Illinois and the BiblioBoard Library in July.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
July 2021	18,493	13,980	32,473
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	18,493	13,980	37,473

BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
July 2021	1,178
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	1,178

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.



Additional libraries and attractions continue to join the program. As of August 8, 382 libraries participate (315 from RAILS and 67 from IHLS). There are 23 attractions as of the same date.

RAILS staff met with College of DuPage to discuss ways Explore More could be used with students. We also met with Quipu Group, our service provider, about the prospect of community colleges joining the program. We also worked with Quipu Group and CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) on detailed technical requirements needed for authentication.

Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian, gave a brief presentation about Explore More Illinois at the RSA Users Group meeting on August 5. (RSA is a RAILS LLSAP or shared online catalog consortium.) Jessica also recorded a [webinar for Dunlap Public Library](#) that is available on the Explore More website for all members to view.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

TumbleBooks Discounts

[TumbleBooks](#) resources include over 1,000 curated e-books and e-audiobooks for ages K-12. RAILS members receive discounts for TumbleBookLibrary (K-6), TumbleMath (K-6), TeenBookCloud, and AudioBookCloud. Further savings are offered for district purchases, bundled purchases, and multi-year contracts. Free trials are available for RAILS members through September 1.

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

ConsortiaManager Update

RAILS completed the data compilation for our migration to ConsortiaManager, an online resource that will help us increase efficiency, capacity, and member communications related to RAILS group purchases. RAILS staff will move into the training phase in September, with weekly training sessions expected to continue through October.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

"Succession Planning for Trustees" Roundtable

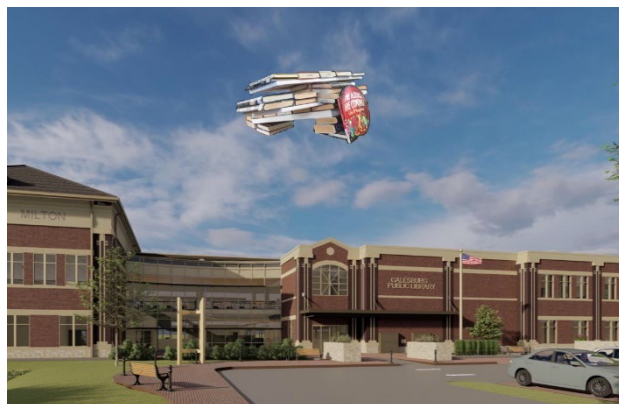
On August 11, RAILS held an online roundtable on "Succession Planning for Trustees" via Zoom. A total of 91 people registered and 41 attended. A [recording is available](#) on the RAILS website.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



RAILS Libraries of All Types Still Have Time to Take the #FundLibraries Challenge!



As of this writing, 15 libraries have taken our [#FundLibraries Challenge](#) by creating a sculpture out of books and challenging another library to participate.

Creations include a Stearman biplane (see photo), a 4th of July book flag, a book tree, and more. [View all creations](#). There is still time for other libraries to join the fun. The challenge ends on Labor Day, September 6.

RAILS Holds Two My Library Is... Online Roundtables

RAILS held two My Library Is... Online Roundtables in late July and early August related to how libraries can use graphic design to better tell their stories. The original idea for these sessions came from our My Library Is... Advisory Team. Both events are archived on the RAILS YouTube page (see links below).

Roundtable	Date	Registered	Attended
Adobe Suite for Libraries	8/3/2021	60	22
Canva for Libraries	7/20/2021	152	70



My Library Is... Newsletter “Hot Off the Press”

RAILS and the My Library Is... Advisory Team recently launched a newsletter to help staff at our member libraries learn more about the [My Library Is... campaign](#).

The third issue published in August. The newsletter has 92 subscribers as of Friday, August 13. Anyone interested can [subscribe from the My Library Is... website](#).

Advocating for Libraries

August Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, and ILA

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 August 10 meeting featured a continuing discussion 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 group also discussed the September 23 System E-Content presentation (see above) and the recent AISLE/ILA Noon Network webinars on the Bluestem, Lincoln, and Monarch book awards. Our next meeting will be on September 7.

Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

Library Digital Collections Webinar Popular with RAILS Members

A total of 97 RAILS members registered to attend the July 29 webinar, “Making the Most of Your Library’s Digital Collection.” Presented by nationally-recognized library technology consultant Nick Tanzi, this webinar helped participants develop a comprehensive approach to maximizing their investment in library digital media. A [recording is available](#) in the RAILS CE Archives.

Moodle Open Source Learning Platform for RAILS Member Training

The RAILS CE and IT teams are working with Cataloging Services Coordinator Nincy George to implement a Moodle site for use with member training. Moodle is an open source learning platform designed to provide a more robust, personalized online learning environment.

Moodle will allow RAILS to offer more in-depth learning curriculum for members that will go beyond the more passive webinar experience. This learning management software will be well-suited for RAILS cataloging training, and we hope to pilot our Moodle site for cataloging training in early 2022.

Upcoming RAILS CE

- September 9 and 16 – “Creating Powerful Presentations” two-part webinar series
- [September 21](#) – “Meet Your Local Horror Authors” virtual panel
- [September 23](#) – “System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators” (see more information above)

Helping All Libraries Provide the Best Possible Service

Report on 2021 Annual Library Certification Process

All Illinois library system members (including RAILS members) must complete an annual certification process each year to retain system membership and remain eligible for Illinois State Library grants. The 2021 certification process ran from February 15 to May 15.

The 2021 process for RAILS members included additional questions for public libraries only about collection expenditures, hours open, and the educational level of the director. RAILS added these questions to aid our understanding of our members and help us serve them better. A summary of our public libraries’ responses to these questions appears at the end of this report.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

New Vaccine Education Toolkit on COVID-19 Pulse Page

RAILS created a [Vaccine Education Toolkit](#) with links to flyers, posters, social media posts, videos, and fact sheets that libraries can reproduce to help spread the word about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to their communities. Libraries are invited to contribute resources they have used to present factual information about vaccines to their communities and/or to help increase vaccine confidence as well.

There is a link to the toolkit on our [COVID-19 Pulse Page](#). We’ll continue to add new resources as we discover them.

Helping Libraries Find EDI Consultants

RAILS CE staff are currently working on adding a number of EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) consultants to the [RAILS Consulting Directory](#). Our members frequently ask for recommendations for consultants who do training and consulting in the EDI area, and we hope these additions will help them find the consulting and training support they need.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

RAILS Staff News

RAILS Has Presence at SLA 2021 Annual Conference

The Special Libraries Association 2021 Annual Conference took place virtually from August 3 – 13, and RAILS staff took part in the festivities. RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom helped organize the Leadership & Management Development Community booth. He also attended several leadership events as he prepares for his presidential year for the Illinois SLA community in 2022.

Public Library Responses to Additional Questions Asked during 2021 Certification Process

Introduction

During the 2021 library certification process, RAILS asked our public library members eight additional questions in an effort to better understand their state of operation. We plan to use the results to identify core operational shortfalls and better serve and support the needs of our public libraries. We plan to ask type-specific questions about school, academic, and special libraries in the future to perform a similar assessment of their library landscape.

Questions We Asked:

- What education level has your library director completed?
- Does the director have at least two years of library director experience?
- If not, have they completed Director's University?
- What is the library's collections budget?
- What is the library's operating budget?
- How many hours per week is the library open?
- Which days of the week is at least one library location open?
- How many hours is the library open on the weekend?
- Is the library open after 5 p.m. on at least one weekday?

Results

Of the 412 public library directors in RAILS, 239 (58%) have a Master's Degree in Library Science. Those libraries have a median operating budget of \$1,470,315 and service population of 18,502. Of the 174 libraries whose director does not have an MLS, their median operating budget is \$118,683 with a service population of 2,453.

When looking at years of experience, 355 (86%) of directors have at least two years experience as a director. Nearly half of the library directors who do not have at least two years of experience have completed Director's University. Of the 57 (13%) of libraries who do not have two years experience, their library's median operating budget is \$571,000 with a service population of 8,160.

We also collected information about library open hours and availability. We asked what days of the week the library is open, total hours open in a normal week, how many hours they are open on a normal Saturday and Sunday, and if the library is open after 5 p.m. on at least one weekday. Below are some of the noteworthy results:

- Over 90% of libraries are open Monday through Saturday
 - Several who are open five days a week including Saturday close on a random weekday

- 28% are open on Sundays

Below is a table that breaks down the number of days open per week.

Days Open per Week	Number of Libraries	Percent of Total	Median Operating Budget	Median Service Population
3 or fewer	7	1.70%	-	-
4	16	3.88%	\$34,034	1,229
5	60	14.56%	\$82,117	1,810
6	218	52.91%	\$439,679	6,973
7	111	26.94%	\$3,429,346	28,172
Grand Total	412	100.00%	\$560,412	8,538

When looking at the number of hours libraries are open on the weekend, we found that 55% of libraries are open between four and eight hours total on the weekends; 91 (23%) are open 12 or more hours. Only 12 libraries reported not being open any hours on the weekend. Of those 12, they have a median operating budget of \$400,000, however, we suspect some of those libraries reported modified COVID hours that may revert back to pre-pandemic times at some point.

Of the 412 public libraries, only 19 (5%) reported not being open after 5 p.m. on a weekday. Those libraries had a median operating budget of \$209,000 with a service population of 3,644.

If you have any questions about the results, please contact [Grant Halter](#), RAILS Data Analysis Manager.

RAILS Board Calendar of Events

<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	
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	No meeting