

17 September 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – September, 2021

My report is very short this month because I was on vacation. However, I have included the first quarterly progress report on my goals in the packet.

Resource sharing – legislative proposals

At the August 30 meeting of the ILA Public Policy Meeting I presented 3 legislative proposals; statewide database funding; removal of an obstacle to public library mergers; and expansion of the Cards for Kids Act. PPC members were then polled about their priorities and the vote was as follows:

Databases	58
Broadband	57
E-book pricing	56
Levy & general fund	48
OMA training	44 (tie)
Cards for <18	44 (tie)
Mergers	29

Their recommendations now go to the ILA Executive Board for a final decision.

Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award at ILA Conference

As I reported previously, RAILS has been awarded the Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award by ILA. I recorded a short “thank you speech” this week, which will be included in the ILA Awards Ceremony on October 14 at 4 pm.

Universal Service

My vacation has interrupted our discussion and agreement on a board statement urging statewide collaboration to extend library service to all residents. At this point, I plan to create a draft statement for the board to review at the October meeting.

Looking ahead to October

We will provide a full report on EDI activities at the Board meeting.

The ILA conference takes place virtually October 12-14. There are many excellent programs for trustees which can be found in the [conference brochure](#).

This Month at RAILS – September 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:

One-on-One Meetings with RAILS School Librarians

RAILS is offering one-on-one meetings with our school librarians to talk about RAILS program/service offerings for schools. The meetings are designed for those new to their school or school librarianship, or those wanting a refresher on system services.

All meetings take place via Zoom and only last about 30 minutes. If you're interested in scheduling a meeting, e-mail communications@railslibraries.info.

Engage with RAILS at October ILA Conference

There are many opportunities to engage with RAILS at the October ILA conference to find out what the system can do to help you in your job. RAILS will have a virtual exhibit booth and host several live booth demos. RAILS staff and board members are also presenting several programs at the conference, and RAILS will receive the Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award at the ILA awards ceremony. Stay tuned to the weekly *RAILS E-News* for more information.

RAILS EDI Grant Training Opportunities

RAILS recently awarded seven EDI Training Grants to help members offer CE that would also be available to other RAILS library staff and board members. Several grant events are scheduled in October – December, including programs on unconscious bias and auditing library collections for diversity and inclusion. Watch the weekly *RAILS E-News* for details.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

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

Web Accessibility: VPAT Project for RAILS Public Libraries

RAILS has a Web Accessibility Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) [web page](#) to help public libraries understand web accessibility and how to vet resources. This project fits in well with RAILS EDI efforts, as digital technology accessibility is essential when considering library purchases to achieve equitable and inclusive service and access to resources. Members can view the VPATs and easily create a customized VPAT page for their library.

eRead Illinois Update

RAILS staff have been analyzing [eRead Illinois](#) usage statistics by library to help inform future development opportunities.



We've also fielded an increased number of questions and support requests from eRead Illinois school library members returning for the new academic year.

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. The following tables show use of these e-resources in August and for FY 2022 thus far.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
August 2021	22,638	15,137	37,775
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	41,131	29,117	70,248

BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
August 2021	632
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	1,810

Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' online cultural pass program. As of this writing, 392 Illinois libraries participate (319 RAILS and 73 IHLS member libraries), and there are 28 attractions.



New attractions include Butterworth Center and Deere-Wiman House in Moline and Museum of the Grande Prairie in Mahomet. We also recently added our first out-of-state attractions: Civil War Museum, Dinosaur

Discovery Museum, and Kenosha Public Museum, all in Kenosha, Wisconsin. See [complete list](#) of attractions.

RAILS staff met with [CARLI](#) (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) staff on August 26 to further discuss steps towards potentially expanding Explore More Illinois to community colleges.

On September 8, Jessica Barnes, RAILS Special Projects Librarian, spoke to 11 attendees at the monthly meeting of the Illinois Association of Museums about opportunities for participating as an Explore More Illinois attraction.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

ConsortiaManager Update

ConsortiaManager (CM) is an online resource that helps increase efficiency, capacity, and member communications related to group purchases. As previously announced, RAILS staff began CM weekly training on September 2 and will continue through October. The training process includes building the content needed to create a robust site for those managing and participating in RAILS discount offerings.

RAILS staff also attended the CM User Group Meeting on August 25 to learn more about new and upcoming enhancements and user experiences. Over 40 consortia subscribe to CM worldwide.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



My Library Is... a Featured Topic at September ILA Marketing Forum Roundtable

At the September meeting of the Illinois Library Association's Marketing Forum Roundtable, Nicole Zimmermann, RAILS Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, shared how the [My Library Is... campaign](#) has successfully helped Illinois libraries share their stories, including options for marketing staff to share resources and best practices via the campaign website.

Advocating for Libraries

September 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 (ILA) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Topics discussed in September included:

- Open school library seat on the RAILS Board
- Continued discussion about efforts to collect more data on Illinois school libraries for advocacy purposes
- RAILS one-on-one meetings with school libraries to acquaint them with system services
- How schools can participate in interlibrary loan
- School Library Per Capita Grants available through the Illinois State Library

The next meeting is scheduled for October 5.

Preparing Libraries for the Future

Helping Libraries Respond to Change

RAILS awarded seven [EDI training grants](#) to help our members offer training that would also be available to staff and board members from other RAILS libraries. The following is a list of all grant events with registration links (where available):

[“Building Accessible Library Collections for People with Disabilities”](#) (August 26)

Grant Recipient: Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

[“How to Be an Exceptional Ally”](#) (September 10)

Grant Recipient: Orland Park Public Library

[“Developing Responsive Collections for LGBTQ+ Patrons of All Ages”](#) (September 15)

Grant Recipient: Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

[“Trauma Informed Services for Spanish Speaking Patrons”](#) (October 1)

Grant Recipient: Warren-Newport Public Library

[“Unconscious Bias: Beyond Awareness”](#) (October 11)

Grant Recipient: Peoria Public Library

[“Auditing Your Collection for Diversity and Inclusion”](#) (October 18)

Grant Recipient: Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

“Harm and Healing in the Library” (November 9)

Grant Recipient: Mount Prospect Public Library

[“Building African American, African, and Caribbean Collections”](#) (November 15)

Grant Recipient: Cooperative Computer Services

“EDIcon: Foundations of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion” (December 3)

Grant Recipient: Prairie Trails Public Library

Expanding Access to Library Resources & Services

FAQ about Public Library Nonresident Services

The Illinois State Library issued a revised [public library nonresident FAQ](#) on the [ISL/Secretary of State website](#). The regional library systems (including RAILS) provided input for the FAQ, which addresses common library questions, including questions about the recent Cards for Kids legislation. RAILS will promote the FAQ to members via our weekly *E-News* and include a link on our [nonresident web page](#).

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

September 30 RAILS Member Update

Stephanie Chase, the consultant helping us develop our new strategic plan, will be the featured speaker at the RAILS Member Update on Thursday, September 30 from 10 a.m. to noon. Members will have an opportunity to hear more about our planning process and to provide feedback.

The update will also feature the latest RAILS news, including information about our new specialized cataloging support program covering non-Latin and Asian languages and different formats not covered by the [Cataloging Maintenance Center](#). This service will be available through an ISL grant at no charge to system members.

RAILS Board members are welcome to attend the update session. [More information/register](#).

One-on-One Meetings with RAILS School Librarians

RAILS is offering one-on-one meetings with our school librarians to talk about RAILS programs/services of special interest, including delivery, continuing education, e-resources, networking opportunities, and more. The meetings are designed for those new to their school or school librarianship, or those wanting a refresher. All meetings take place via Zoom and only last about 30 minutes.

RAILS publicized the “one-on-ones” via our weekly *E-News*, and AISLE also helped us to spread the word. Within a week’s time, 12 schools indicated interest. In addition, RAILS also received a request to schedule a special “Introduction to RAILS” for Chicago Public School librarians, and we are following up on this.

RAILS at October Illinois Library Association (ILA) Virtual Conference

RAILS is a Platinum Sponsor of the ILA Conference, and we are sponsoring the President’s Program, featuring American Library Association Executive Director Tracie D. Hall.

RAILS will have a virtual exhibit booth, and exhibit hours are 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. on October 12 – 14. RAILS Board members are encouraged to “stop by” our booth and to promote the booth to RAILS members, including trustees from RAILS public libraries.

RAILS staff are also planning several live booth demos for up to 25 attendees at any given time. Stay tuned to the weekly *RAILS E-News* for further details.

RAILS staff and board members are participating in the following ILA programs:

- [October 12 at 1:30 p.m.](#) – “Actively Anti-Racist Library Service to Leisure Readers: Foundations” (followed by a [discussion at 3 p.m.](#))
--Becky Spratford, RAILS Board member, is a co-presenter.
- [Wednesday, October 13 at 10 a.m.](#) - “Where Can I Go to Zoom Court? -- Meeting Room, Digital Access, and Electronic Connectivity Post-Pandemic”
--Halle Cox, RAILS Board member, is a co-presenter.
- [Thursday, October 14 at 10 a.m.](#) – “Walk the Line: How Trustees Can Best Lead Their Libraries without Overstepping Their Authority”
--Joe Filapek, RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education, and Becky Spratford, RAILS Board member
- [Thursday, October 14 at 11:30 a.m.](#) – “The E-Book is Dead, Long Live the E-Book”
--Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, is a co-presenter.
- [Thursday, October 14 at 11:30 a.m.](#) – “From Disconnected to Diploma Bound: Virtually Reengaging Adults Back into Education and Careers”
--Leila Heath, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs, and Jessica Barnes, RAILS Special Projects Librarian, are co-presenters.

RAILS at PUG DAY

PrairieCat Users Group Day (PUG Day) is an annual event dedicated to professional development, networking, and continuing education. PUG Days 2021 was virtual this year, with live virtual sessions offered several days in September. Nancy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, presented a program on “Cataloging Essentials.”

RAILS Board Calendar of Events

Document 7.3.1

<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

17 September 2021

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Goals for FY 22 – progress report Quarter 1

As requested, here is the first quarterly project report on my goals.

Goal 1: Work with board, staff and members to develop a new strategic plan for RAILS that will be flexible, aspirational and practical, and will guide and help RAILS member libraries to provide innovative and essential services for their users.

Work on the strategic plan has begun on a couple of fronts; the board had their first brainstorming session with Stephanie and Cindy at the August meeting and future sessions are being scheduled. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was on September 16 and multiple town hall meetings with members have also been scheduled. Stephanie will be the main speaker at the RAILS member update on September 30. Stephanie and Cindy also held their first meeting with RAILS staff to introduce them to the process and get their initial ideas on goals.

Goal 2: Continue advocacy work for statewide database funding.

I presented three proposals to the ILA PPC meeting on August 30, and the statewide databases funding was voted the top committee priority, and it now goes to the ILA Executive Board for approval. We will work with ILA and the state library on next steps, and continue our own advocacy efforts.

Goal 3: Ensure that RAILS is financially stable; investigate revenue streams, increases to the APC grant, restructuring and other ways of being more efficient and economical while still providing needed services to members.

We have submitted 2 grant requests to the state library for funding of RAILS L2 work and the special cataloging of world languages in FY 2022. The total amount requested is \$164,406. We are also reducing our expenditures on the Biblioboard platform, focusing on the most used resources and the Illinois author aspect which is most important to our users. We are continuing to look at other expenditures and revenue streams as well.

Goal 4: Continue to work on the EDI initiative; improve RAILS internal culture, work with board EDI committee to meet the needs of members; establish a cohort of libraries to receive training; infuse EDI into all aspects of the strategic plan and the process to create the plan.

Work is continuing and excellent progress is being made. The staff Climate Team has set priorities and developed projects and timelines. The Board EDI subcommittees are also working on specific projects and we are having discussions with our consultant Biz Lindsay-Ryan about the development of a member library training cohort, hopefully to launch next March. We will schedule a full report to the board about all of our EDI work and progress in the coming months. We also awarded seven EDI training grants to member libraries to support CE programs that would also be available to other libraries.

Goal 5: Continue advocacy efforts for all types of libraries, and for multitype collaboration. Expand advocacy committee to include members and work closely with ILA, IHLS and AISLE.

Michael Campbell has taken over as chair of the Advocacy Committee. We have not yet reached out to possible additional members of the committee.

Goal 6: Identify data needs of member libraries and provide services to meet them as appropriate.

Not much to report on this goal yet as Grant has been mostly focused on internal data work related to the E-Read formula, the E-Read grant and certification.

Goal 7: Continue to grow cooperative purchasing program and investigate revenue opportunities.

Leila continues to grow this program with recent additions such as Consortia Manager, a tool which streamlines the group purchases process and enhances capacity and efficiency for RAILS, and VPAT, or Voluntary Product Accessibility Template, which will aid member libraries in ensuring their websites are accessible.

Goal 8: Focus on the needs of school libraries; add specific questions to certification; work with AISLE, ISL and IHLS to gather complete and accurate data about school libraries in Illinois.

We had a good meeting with IHLS and the state library in August where we agreed to develop additional questions for school libraries for certification next year for both RAILS and IHLS. We think this will greatly increase our understanding of school library budgets and staffing, and the effects of the pandemic. We will work AISLE, ISL and IHLS to improve our school library data overall; the state library has expressed willingness to fund this work. We continue to meet monthly with AISLE, ILA, IHLS and the state library; we started these meetings a little over a

year ago and the collaboration and regular communication is really having an impact on our understanding of school library needs and AISLE awareness of RAILS services to school libraries. For example, we have been receiving requests from school libraries for one-on-one virtual visits with our Engagement Manager to better understand RAILS services.

Goal 9: Continue efforts to identify technology and other methods that will modernize delivery services and bring financial efficiency.

We are continuing to analyze the results of the RFP for delivery services and automation that we issued earlier this summer. We plan to report to the board at an upcoming meeting.

Goal 10: Develop closer relationships with IHLS and CPL.

Our regular meetings with AISLE have enhanced our relationship with schools generally, including the Chicago Public Schools. Staff there have expressed interest in our board school library seat and staff at CPS libraries recently attended an EDI committee meeting. IHLS Executive Director Leslie Bednar will be attending the LLSAP Sustainability Working Group meeting next week and we will be working together on additional questions to include for school libraries next year in certification. We are also working closely together on policies related to vaccines, masking, and COVID testing.

Goal 11: Restructure the Finance and HR departments, as appropriate to provide excellent financial stewardship and appropriate leadership of the finance and HR work at RAILS.

Human Resources staff are now reporting to Monica Harris, freeing up Jim Kregor to focus on projects leading up to his retirement. The Director of Finance job has been posted and will close in mid-October. We hope to begin interviewing soon after that. Additional retirements are expected in Finance next spring after the hiring of the new Director.