1.1 Narrative Report

Introduction

This narrative provides information on the Reaching Across Illinois Library System's (RAILS) FY 2021 activities and accomplishments. These activities/accomplishments relate directly to the goals and objectives in our FY 2021 System Area and Per Capita Grant application and meet the requirements of the administrative rules for library systems. Our overarching goal throughout the year was to provide the highest quality service to RAILS member libraries of all types (academic, public, school, and special) and to help them provide the highest quality service possible to their customers.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the services RAILS was able to offer in FY 2021. For example, RAILS did not schedule any in-person continuing education, networking activities, or library visits; members were asked to quarantine items moving through our delivery service for differing time periods for much of the year; and Explore More Illinois attractions were closed for most of the fiscal year, affecting our plans to expand this resource sharing program. We also delayed plans for a website redesign because the "end-of-life" date of the Drupal version used on our website was extended for another year due to the pandemic.

Though many of our planned activities changed, RAILS still accomplished all of the goals and objectives included in our FY 2021 operational plan as detailed below. As was the case with our FY 2021 operational plan, this report is arranged by RAILS strategic plan goals and objectives.

Strategic Plan Goal One: *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*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond	Provided continuing education (CE) and consulting on general resource sharing issues, interlibrary loan (ILL), issues related to nonresidents, etc. as described in other sections of this document. Encouraged members to participate in a wide variety of resource sharing programs and activities as documented below. Worked with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve, increase, and promote resource sharing to all types of libraries in Illinois. Committee priorities in FY 2021 included increasing a statewide culture of resource sharing, improving awareness of resource sharing, and providing services for the unserved. Collaborated with the Illinois State Library (ISL), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Chicago Public Library System (CPLS), Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL), Illinois Library Association (ILA), Special

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Libraries Association-Illinois Chapter (SLA-Illinois), and other stakeholders to expand resource sharing in Illinois. Specific examples of collaborative activities are included throughout this document. Collaborated with and supported the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). Participated in ICOLC activities relevant to RAILS priorities. RAILS' Executive Director served on the ICOLC task force analyzing discrepancies in OCLC pricing for Illinois public libraries. The task force wrote a report on the results, sent it to OCLC, and asked them to address pricing concerns. Provided ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. Partnered with DPLA and others on continued exploration of the SimplyE app, as described later in this document.
Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing	**Promote/Support LLSAP Membership** Provided a mix of financial support and in-kind services to six RAILS LLSAPs: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA-NFP, and SWAN. By the end of FY 2021, 383 RAILS library agencies (539 individual buildings) participated in one of these LLSAPs. Worked with the three LLSAPs that received website support from RAILS (PrairieCat, RSA-NFP, and SWAN) to transition this service to LLSAP staff Publicized new formula for LLSAP support for FY 2022 Offered catalog membership grants to encourage libraries to join one of the six RAILS LLSAPs. Awarded $30,080 to three libraries, including one public and two school libraries. Helped members prepare for the upcoming requirement in the Illinois administrative rules to evaluate whether they will make their holdings available via a shared collection. Publicized Find More Illinois and LLSAP membership as options for meeting this requirement. Held annual Consortia In-Service Day. Approximately 50 LLSAP staff, as well as IHLS and RAILS staff members attended. Promoted the value of consortium membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools and member encounters Worked with the RAILS Consortia Committee to expand resource sharing and promote consortial membership

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Expand and Promote Find More Illinois Met with LINKin libraries to discuss the possibility of them joining Find More Illinois (FMI) Welcomed first nonautomated library (Waynesville Township Library) to FMI Promoted specific aspects of FMI via the *RAILS E-News* and other means, including: • Benefits to standalone libraries • Benefits to libraries participating in shared catalog consortia • Helping libraries provide better interlibrary loan service Continued to offer IHLS the opportunity to participate in FMI **Support High-Quality Cataloging** Continued and expanded basic cataloging training implemented in FY 2020 Offered virtual cataloging continuing education (CE) in response to member feedback, including: • "Copy Cataloging of Print Monographs using RDA" • "MARC 21: An Introduction" • "Understanding Dewey Decimal Classification and WebDewey" • "Beginner's Guide to Library of Congress Classification (LCC)" • "Classifying Fiction Works Using LCC" Promoted Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) training throughout FY 2021
Work with the Illinois State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System, and other stakeholders to improve physical delivery services through streamlining and standardizing operations and evaluating alternative methods and best practices	**Providing Delivery Service Based on Need** Worked with RAILS members of all types (academic, public, school, and special) to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs Continued contracting with Continental Transportation Logistics and Comet Messenger Service to provide outsourced delivery service. (RAILS ended our contract with Comet at the end of FY 2021 after determining we could provide the service more economically and efficiently in house.) Continued providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI libraries via ILDS

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Met with ISL, IHLS, and CARLI to discuss requiring libraries to quarantine delivery materials based on the latest pandemic developments. Adjusted RAILS quarantine periods as needed. Attended meeting of delivery consortium representatives from several Midwestern states to discuss the best possible way to provide service during the pandemic Continued working with consultant Greg Pronevitz to help plan for the future of delivery. Released RFI seeking information from vendors across the country on potential efficient and cost-effective delivery strategies. Invited Greg Pronevitz to speak about his work with RAILS at a member update, including options for automating services in the future. Prepared an FAQ to answer questions members raised at the update. Issued RFP seeking proposals from service providers to provide an efficient and cost-effective long-term delivery strategy. Options open for proposals included sorting, delivery, shuttle services, and mail forwarding services. Responses were due on July 12, 2021. **Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) (name changed to GeoMARC)** Continued working with LASA/GeoMARC on a plan to optimize the number and locations of RAILS buildings and delivery hubs, and to make resulting routing changes as efficient as possible **Delivery CE/Consulting** Consulted with members on delivery issues/concerns. Widely promoted the use of the delivery help desk ticketing system via RAILS communication tools and member encounters.
Develop and implement innovative projects to expand access to a wider variety of resources for Illinois residents, including providing access to digital content/e-resources and expertise	**eRead Illinois Axis 360** Explored alternative vendor options for eRead Illinois to ensure an optimal user experience Recruited RAILS libraries and IHLS non-SHARE libraries to join eRead Illinois. Supported the training and promotional needs of participants. Evaluated eRead content to ensure that it continued to meet member needs

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Submitted application and received $125,000 grant from ISL to purchase e-books and audiobooks for K-12 users of eRead Illinois. Encouraged members to submit purchasing suggestions. Purchased 2,822 e-books and 934 e-audiobooks with grant funds. Revamped eRead Illinois sign-up process to greatly expedite the process for onboarding new libraries Developed a dashboard to help public libraries retrieve statistics on the number of e-books and audiobooks in eRead Illinois for their Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR) **BiblioBoard/inkie.org** Continued to partner with BiblioLabs to expand access to a wider variety of e-resources for Illinois residents via the BiblioBoard platform Continued to widely publicize BiblioBoard/inkie.org resources as being free to all Illinois libraries courtesy of RAILS. Sent press release to media contacts statewide to publicize the availability of these resources to everyone in Illinois. Shared template of release with members to use in their local communities. Examined current marketing strategy and usage statistics to achieve deeper knowledge and use of all BiblioBoard and inkie.org resources by Illinois libraries Continued offering discounted pricing on BiblioBoard resources for creating and sharing community collections **Explore More Illinois** Suspended program during pandemic shutdowns of Explore More attractions. Reopened program on April 1, 2021. Welcomed IHLS members to join the program beginning in July 2020 Continued recruiting libraries to join the program throughout the fiscal year. By the end of FY 2021, 372 Illinois public libraries participated (306 RAILS libraries and 66 IHLS libraries). Publicized the program to all Illinois public libraries and encouraged them to participate. Customized marketing materials to make them relevant to IHLS libraries as well.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Hosted webinar for libraries new to Explore More or those needing a refresher
	Initiated and hosted ePass (software used for Explore More) networking group meeting with attendees from other U.S. cultural pass programs to discuss pandemic strategies and future plans
	Began investigating possibility of adding community college participants to Explore More Illinois
	Expand Member Access to Additional E-Resources
	With strong support from the RAILS Universal Service Committee, relaunched efforts to seek legislative support for statewide database access in the 2022 state budget. Updated 2020 proposal and compiled talking points to use to gain support. Met with Illinois House Minority Leader. Contacted other legislators and asked members to contact their legislators. This effort will continue in FY 2022.
	Presented "System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators" webinar in conjunction with IHLS; 75 RAILS and IHLS members registered
	Gave presentation on RAILS e-resources for school libraries at Digital Literacy Conference
	Presented a RAILS Roundtable on "E-Content Options for Schools." A total of 98 people registered and approximately 50 attended live.
	Worked with member library staff to develop a Vendor Privacy Policies page on the RAILS website with links to privacy policies for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries. Encouraged all RAILS public libraries to add their vendor/e-resources information.
	Launched revised E-Resources Access Pulse Page on the RAILS website to respond to the great interest in electronic resources among libraries and library patrons
	Met regularly with IHLS staff to discuss RAILS programs/services available to all Illinois libraries, how libraries could take advantage of these resources, and additional opportunities for collaboration
	Continued dialogue with publishers on need for better e-book access/pricing for libraries/consortia. Attended ALA's Core E-Books Interest Group meeting, which included an update on proposed legislation in different states.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Continued to support the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project to promote and encourage self-publishing
Use economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their customers than they would be able to afford on their own	Saved RAILS members approximately $1 million in FY 2021 through our discounts/group purchase offers Explored new and advantageous deals for member libraries. New/ expanded FY 2021 deals included: • Barcodes, Inc. • Comics Plus • Communico • ConverSight myLIBRO Insights • EBSCO middle school and elementary database packages and resources, Prenda Code Club) • Gale Engage, Gale Analytics, and Gale database package • Homeless Training Institute • Minitex Products Store • OrangeBoy Savannah • Patron Point • Quill Preferred Program • RDA Toolkit • Swank movie license Gathered member input on desired discounts/group purchases and implemented new offerings as appropriate Purchased ConsortiaManager to streamline RAILS' group purchasing processes and save staff time. The member interface will help libraries explore and purchase discounted resources. In response to member input, explored the viability of IT-related discounts. Hosted an "IT Purchasing in Libraries" virtual discussion to learn more about members' IT hardware and software purchasing needs. Subsidized cost of Public Web Browser to help RAILS libraries customize their web browsers and workstations for specific uses Promoted ISL Try-It! Illinois database trial to RAILS members **Career Online High School (COHS)** Subsidized cost of COHS platform for all Illinois libraries, including extensive training for participating staff, implementation, and student recruitment support

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Hosted webinars for libraries to learn more about the program

Ensured that the transition of the COHS program from Gale to Smart Horizons Career Online Education (SHCOE) ran smoothly. Developed new RAILS/COHS marketing site with updated promotional materials.

Negotiated new pricing for COHS scholarships with SHCOE, resulting in a 15% savings and making it possible for more libraries to participate

Hosted quarterly meetings of the RAILS COHS networking group

Met with staff at Flossmoor Public Library to discuss ways to promote COHS to youth and teen librarians |
| Offer members a variety of opportunities to build collaborative relationships to share best practices, expertise, and to develop innovative solutions to common issues and challenges | Encouraged use of RAILS mailing lists/online forums on a regular basis via *RAILS E-News* articles, at networking events, and during individual member interactions

In response to member requests, established new mailing lists/forums:
- Business Services
- Passport Services

In response to member requests, helped form new networking groups:
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Library Workers
- Illinois Libraries Present

Supported Illinois Libraries Present, a joint programming cooperative focused on bringing quality virtual programming to libraries and cultural institutions in Illinois through shared purchasing power. Created an FAQ with information on how RAILS members could learn more about the program or pursue their own quality virtual programming efforts.

Developed a "Networking Group FAQ" and a "Starting a New Networking Group" guide in response to member feedback

Promoted ability for networking groups to add their events to the "new L2"

Provided Zoom licenses to eight networking groups in FY 2021; a total of 23 groups have licenses provided by RAILS as of this writing

Scheduled RAILS Online Roundtables (networking events with a featured speaker) on a variety of topics of interest to RAILS member libraries of all types, including:
- Census 2020 Update – 89 registered, 59 attended |

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• Passport Services – 75 registered, 64 attended • Using Data in Libraries – 109 registered, 66 attended • Libraries and the 2020 Election – 70 registered, 51 attended • Approaches to Genrefication – 135 registered, 67 attended • Easy Interlibrary Loan for Schools – 29 registered, 12 attended • My Library Is… Grant – 13 registered, 5 attended • Trustee Update – 206 registered, 73 attended • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programming – 155 registered, 75 attended • Promoting Titles Virtually for Schools – 91 registered, 70 attended • Strategic Planning for Trustees – 76 registered, 40 attended Developed weekly "this or that" question exercise on Facebook to help members get to know staff from different types of RAILS libraries Partnered with the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum and four RAILS public libraries to pilot a new virtual suite of exhibits and programs commemorating the history of women's activism. Shared virtual exhibit with other libraries.
Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation	Helped plan and publicize a variety of multitype virtual events, including: • Joint event with Health Science Librarians of Illinois (HSLI) and SLA Illinois: "What We Do to Survive (and Excel) In Our Organizations" – approx. 70 attendees • SLA Illinois virtual visit to the Field Museum Library – over 50 attendees • Part of planning team and presented at 2021 SLA Midwest Symposium – over 50 attendees See COVID section later in this document for other FY 2021 multitype networking events. RAILS' Member Engagement Manager was elected to a three-year term on the Special Libraries Association Illinois Community Board of Directors (2021 President-Elect, 2022 President, 2023 Past President)

Strategic Plan Goal Two: *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Help member libraries ensure that current/ potential customers are aware of all of the programs/services/resources the library has to offer	Expanded the library stories/blog sections of the My Library Is … (MLI) website. Added search capability. Recruited member posts to show how libraries take a lead role in helping their communities deal with everyday challenges and issues, including but not limited to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruited 11 members from all four library types (academic, public, school, and special) to form MLI Advisory Group to help publicize the MLI campaign and available resources Initiated meeting with IHLS staff to discuss ways we could partner on the MLI initiative. Invited IHLS staff to participate in MLI Advisory Group meetings. Relaunched *Elders of the Internet* video starring Nick Offerman on its one-year anniversary (Library Lovers Day, February 14). Developed media kit with talking points, social media copy, suggestions for promoting the video, and more to help library staff promote why libraries are needed more than ever in the internet age. Worked with MLI Advisory Group to launch an e-newsletter with links to blog posts, templates, and other resources Based on member and advisory group feedback, offered "Marketing with Infographics" continuing education webinar Developed/participated in a variety of MLI virtual presentations, including: • 2020 ILA Conference – co-presenter on "Effective Marketing Campaigns" session • MLI presentation at RSA Day • MLI presentation at PrairieCat Delegates Assembly – approximately 100 attendees • MLI presentation to ILA Marketing Forum – approximately 20 attendees • MLI presentation at PrairieCat's PUG Day event – approximately 30 attendees • MLI Advisory Team panel discussion • Presented roundtable on MLI grants as noted above Expanded and restructured RAILS' MLI grant program to reach more libraries of all types and sizes. Awarded $12,100 to three projects in first round of FY 2021 grants.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Focused on school libraries with second round of MLI grants. Partnered with AISLE to evaluate grant applications. Awarded $1,000 grants to 14 school libraries.

Initiated #FundLibraries social media challenge to help all Illinois libraries bring more attention to the need for proper library funding in Illinois and beyond

Recorded MLI-related *Sparks* podcasts to promote activities other libraries could implement to show their value more effectively, including:
• Fox River Valley Public Library District interview about the importance of data in library advocacy
• Quincy Public Library interview about working with library users to protest library budget cuts with the city council
• Gerber/Hart Library & Archives interview about their MLI grant project to create a podcast series on LGBTQ life in Chicago
• Durand CUSD #322 interview about their MLI project to promote the combined school and public library |
| Help member libraries prove their value to administrative bodies, funders, elected officials, etc. | Included blog posts/stories on the MLI website that other libraries could use to strategize how to provide essential services to users during COVID-19

Promoted talking points for all types of libraries created as part of the MLI campaign. Initiated new talking points on specific issues as described elsewhere in this document.

The activities in the previous section also helped to meet this objective. |
| Advocate for and help members advocate for all libraries as they face funding and other challenges | Worked with RAILS Board Advocacy Committee on a variety of advocacy-related issues affecting all types of libraries, including:
• How best to advocate for and support school libraries
• How best to advocate for and support specialized libraries
• Partnership opportunities for academic and school libraries
• How to develop new library advocates from non-advocates
• Importance of attending ILA legislative meetups

Worked with Advocacy Committee to present a program at the 2020 ILA conference on the importance of school librarians and the need for public and school library collaboration

Beginning in November 2020, reinitiated monthly meetings with AISLE and IHLS to collaborate on advocacy-related initiatives to help Illinois school libraries. ILA joined the group in January 2021. |

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Tackled the issue of the lack of data about Illinois school libraries. Discussed possible solutions with ISL and AISLE. Met with high-level staff at Follett to ask for assistance in understanding the school library workforce. Filed a FOIA request with the Illinois State Board of Education as they require for data inquiries. We will continue with these efforts in FY 2022.

Initiated meeting with ILA and IHLS to discuss potential collaborative efforts and avoiding duplication of efforts, including My Library Is… campaign activities. Invited ILA to participate in our monthly meetings with AISLE and IHLS as indicated above.

Encouraged RAILS Board, staff, and members to attend ILA virtual legislative meetups to help promote the value of libraries to elected officials. Provided ILA with stories from the My Library Is… website to use at the meetups to demonstrate the essential role libraries played throughout the pandemic.

Continued to work with the ILA Public Policy Committee to discuss upcoming legislation of importance to libraries. Kept RAILS libraries informed of important legislative issues via weekly *RAILS E-News* and other communications.

Provided advocacy alerts as needed via the *RAILS E-News* and website to help members advocate on important issues, including:
Need to support the Library Stabilization Fund Act to help libraries recover from the pandemic
Need for broadband funding
Need to support the Build America's Libraries Act to provide federal funding to repair, modernize, and construct library facilities in underserved and marginalized communities
Need to ask Congressional appropriators to include funding for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program
Need to ask for increased funding for libraries in FY 2022 federal budget

Helped spread the word to RAILS members about funding available for libraries through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. Publicized ILA's ARPA Funding for Illinois Libraries via the *RAILS E-News* and COVID-19 Pulse Page on the RAILS website. |

Strategic Plan Goal Three: *Help libraries be the best they can be*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Continue to provide continuing education (CE) to ensure ongoing staff development for all levels of staff at all types of libraries	Offered consulting/CE on resource sharing, library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules. (See also other sections of this document for information on CE/consulting for specific core system services.) Offered training and consulting in other mandated areas as needed, including offering harassment prevention training to help members meet the requirements of the Workplace Transparency Act. Several hundred members registered to attend our session focused on harassment prevention from a management perspective. Worked on special project to evaluate RAILS CE services and programs. Continued to gather member input on CE needs and implemented training to meet those needs, including creating a revised CE event post-evaluation. Partnered with AISLE to offer CE based on AISLE member feedback. This included an online workshop on the future ready school library as well as a panel presentation on system resources for educators. Changed the scope of RAILS' CE event grants to focus on events related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as referenced below Continued partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership program for interested RAILS libraries. In FY 2021, 65 RAILS members joined or renewed their subscriptions, an increase of approximately 20% over last year. Continued partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline Continued to serve as sponsor for library-related conferences as possible as referenced below
Ensure that all libraries are able to offer the best possible service to their community of users	**New L2 (librarylearning.info)** Launched new and improved Library Directory & Learning Calendar (L2) • Conducted training for a wide variety of L2 stakeholders • Widely communicated the benefits of the new L2 via the *RAILS E-News*, website, *RAILS Minute*, individual interactions with members, at CE events, and via other communication methods • Worked with ISL and IHLS to administer FY 2021 certification via L2 for the first time • Continued development work on new and improved L2 features

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Certification Met with ISL and IHLS to discuss the certification schedule for 2021 Widely promoted the need for all RAILS libraries to certify via L2 via a number of communication vehicles and member interactions. Answered questions. Followed up with libraries that didn't certify. Promoted the need for RAILS public libraries to answer additional questions to help us with our continued work to revise system membership standards.
Ensure the ongoing education of library leaders and the development of leadership skills for library staff	Worked with statewide partners to plan/implement fifth annual Directors University in a virtual format. Approximately 50 participants completed the program, almost equally divided between RAILS and IHLS. Worked with statewide partners to plan/implement Elevate Illinois Libraries Leadership Program in a virtual format and with an EDI theme Offered CE webinars to help members develop leadership skills, including: "Director Essentials Series – Working with Library Trustees" "Director Essentials Series – Library Facilities" "10 Tips for Complying with FOIA" "Compliance with the Open Meetings Act (OMA)" "Passing the Baton: Succession Planning" "Disaster Planning and Preparedness" Provided statewide online, on-demand trustee training in partnership with United for Libraries through "Short Takes for Trustees" series Offered two special RAILS Online Roundtable events for trustees as noted above Promoted other trustee education opportunities, including ILA's Trustee Forum workshops Consulted with/attended library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements and to develop leadership skills

Strategic Plan Goal Four: *Prepare libraries for the future*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Help libraries anticipate, understand and respond to changing social issues and customer needs	Provided leadership to help libraries respond to specific challenges, trends, and issues in the outside world, including: **COVID-19** Continuously updated the RAILS COVID-19 Pulse Page to include the latest local, statewide, and national information relevant to libraries • Regularly updated RAILS reopening survey to keep members up to date on other libraries' reopening plans and current service offerings • Posted an FAQ in response to member questions about mask requirements during the bridge phase • Kept members informed about changes in delivery quarantine periods • Posted information about funding and grant opportunities members could take advantage of to deal with pandemic-related expenses RAILS Executive Director continued to serve on REALM Project Steering Committee. Continued to alert members to the latest REALM developments via the COVID-19 Pulse Page, *RAILS E-News*, and member update sessions. Planned/offered a wide variety of CE webinars to address continuing member needs related to COVID-19, including: • "Reopening under COVID-19 – A Space Planning Approach" • "How to Tackle Social Media in the Time of Coronavirus & Times of Unrest" • "Social Media Listening and Adapting Libraries During the Pandemic" • "Extreme Self Care for Extreme Times" • "COVID-19: Employer Q&A" • "Zoom Storytime Basics" • "Managing Meetings: The Virtual Meeting Experience and Beyond" • "Assessing Virtual Programming" • "Grab & Go Programs" • "The COVID-19 Vaccine: Employer Options" • "Libraries & Technology in the Post-Pandemic Landscape" • "Reopening the Library: Ventilation and Air Circulation Considerations" • "Socially Distanced Reader's Advisory and Programs" • "Advanced Uses of Zoom and Technology for Virtual Library Programming"

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Planned variety of multitype networking events for members to engage and share best practices during the pandemic, including: • Collaborated with IACRL and IHLS to plan/host town hall for academic libraries to share plans for reopening physical spaces • Promoted/participated in IACRL's Spark event, "Trial by Fire - Lessons Learned from a Pandemic" • Promoted/participated in IACRL Spark event, "Looking Back, Looking Forward" (COVID-19 responses) • Offered "Online Water Cooler" drop-in, virtual, informal networking events for all library staff Collected/analyzed information from various e-content consortia to determine the impact of the pandemic on libraries. Developed/ shared report on *The Impact of COVID-19 Related Closures on Library E-Content Usage*. Worked with ISL, ILA, and member libraries to advocate for vaccines for library workers when vaccines were in short supply. Shared ILA's information on the availability of vaccines for library workers in different Illinois counties on COVID-19 Pulse Page. Sent letters and emails to departments of public health in each county where RAILS hubs are located to advocate for library workers receiving the vaccine. **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)** Launched major EDI initiative that is continuing throughout FY 2022 Contracted with Elisabeth Lindsay-Ryan, a diversity and inclusion consultant, to help us develop a Workplace Climate Team, provide training for all RAILS staff, and work with our board EDI committee and subcommittees Formed RAILS Board EDI Committee with board members, staff members, and staff from RAILS member libraries. Sought representation from all types and sizes of RAILS libraries. Selected 17 members from nearly 40 applications. • Established three subcommittees; Recruitment, Hiring and Retention; Training, Leadership and Advocacy; and Programming and Outreach Services Launched EDI Pulse Page on RAILS website, featuring current information on RAILS and other EDI initiatives, events, and CE offerings. Invited members to contribute information about their EDI activities.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Planned/offered CE on EDI-related issues, including: • "Reducing Unconscious Bias in the Library" • "Diversity Audits for Library Collections" Offered EDI training grants for libraries, networking groups, and library consortia to help them develop EDI-focused training events that would be open to all RAILS libraries. Received seven applications. (Actual grants were awarded in FY 2022.) Recorded *Sparks* podcasts on EDI-related issues, including: • Gerber/Hart Library & Archives interview about their podcast series on LGBTQ life in Chicago referenced above • Interview with staff from Evanston, St. Charles, and Skokie Public Libraries about their EDI activities Expanded efforts to recruit a diverse RAILS Board as described below Promoted RAILS e-resources related to racial justice and EDI available through eRead Illinois and the BiblioBoard Library **Census 2020** Continued to plan and implement activities for the census grant awarded to RAILS in FY 2020 from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Received additional IDHS funding. • Continued working with grant subrecipients • Provided free census materials to member libraries to help them promote completion of the census, including posters, bookmarks, yard signs, hand sanitizer, face masks, and t-shirts Continued to develop and expand the Census 2020 Pulse Page on the RAILS website, including the census toolkit with promotional materials members could use to promote completion of the census Repeatedly urged and encouraged member libraries to get out the count and provided suggestions on how they could accomplish this goal Added hundreds of titles to the BiblioBoard Library through the IDHS "Care About the Count" 2020 census campaign. Promoted this "Illinois Census 2020 Collection" widely as being available to everyone in Illinois without cost through RAILS. Hosted RAILS Online Roundtable for libraries to discuss current Census 2020 activities as referenced above

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Other Trend Awareness Activities Continued to develop and expand Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website • Launched new Data in Libraries Pulse Page to respond to growing interest in how libraries can better interpret and use data (See other sections of this document for info on other pulse pages) Produced RAILS *Sparks* podcast featuring interviews on current issues/trends affecting libraries of all types. See other sections of this document for information on specific podcast interviews.
Partner with libraries and other stakeholders to foster an educated, engaged, and civil society	Launched major EDI campaign as described elsewhere in this document. Promoted EDI principles and offered a number of activities and tools to help members with their EDI efforts. Worked with libraries and other stakeholders to encourage everyone in Illinois to complete the 2020 Census as noted above. Continued to advocate for library access for all through the activities described in the next section.
Expand access to library resources and services by addressing issues related to unserved and underserved Illinois residents and continuing to work toward a statewide library card	Worked with RAILS Board Universal Service Committee on a variety of issues related to the unserved in Illinois, including: • Developing a strategy for advancing universal service statewide. The committee called for the RAILS Board to pass a resolution calling for statewide collaboration and action. • Possible approaches to extending free library cards to all nonresident minors, not just those covered by Cards for Kids Act • Potential role of community colleges in serving the unserved • How to advance the statewide database proposal (referenced above) Worked with the Universal Services Committee to plan/present a program at the 2020 ILA conference on expanding library services to the unserved Supported Cards for Kids Act legislation • Provided information about the proposed legislation for members, including how they could comment on revised administrative rules. Added information on the act to RAILS Universal Service Pulse Page. • Invited Greg McCormick and Joe Natale to speak about the act at member update sessions

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• Developed talking points library staff could use to explain the importance of the legislation to taxpayers
	Provided more information on intergovernmental agreements (IGA) in response to member feedback • Consulted with members on IGAs • Included information on IGAs on RAILS website, including an FAQ and sample template • Planned/offered "Every Student Gets a Card: Leveraging IGAs to Grant Library Access to Illinois Students" webinar. Several attendees said they would pursue forming an IGA as a result of attending this webinar.
	Continued to promote BiblioBoard platform as a way to deliver e-content to anyone in Illinois, including the unserved
	Publicized extended deadline (due to the pandemic) for library boards to vote annually on participation in the nonresident program and for members to update their participation information via L2. Added links to L2 to make the process easier for members.

Strategic Plan Goal Five: *Aim to be the best library system in the country*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Fully communicate and engage with members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	**Member Recruitment** Engaged with libraries interested in RAILS membership. Visited potential members virtually to ensure they met membership criteria. Work with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL. (See section 3.1 for specifics) **General Member Communication/Engagement** Promoted available programs/services via RAILS communication tools, virtual conference exhibit booths, and other member encounters Scheduled regular member updates to share the latest RAILS, statewide, and national news of interest to member libraries, including pandemic-related developments. An average of 300 – 400 members attended each session. Produced 20 *RAILS Minute* videos to keep members informed about the latest RAILS news. There were more than 2,200 total YouTube

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	views and more than 1,100 Facebook views. On average, over 100 people watched each individual video. Reached out to all RAILS networking groups to gauge their interest in having a RAILS staff member visit a virtual meeting to discuss the latest RAILS news and any concerns/issues group members were dealing with during the pandemic that RAILS might be able to help with. Visited approximately 57 groups in FY 2021. Began project to evaluate the weekly *RAILS E-News* to determine what (if any) changes should be made to the structure and content. This project will continue in FY 2022. Visited 34 RAILS member libraries virtually (due to the pandemic) as reported in section 3.4 of this annual report. Continued to engage with RAILS members via social media. Created campaigns and other opportunities for members to engage with each other as referenced elsewhere in this document. **Virtual Conference Activities** Presented programs, exhibited at, and/or sponsored a variety of virtual conferences and other events, including: AISLE Virtual Conference • Hosted vendor demo presentation on RAILS resources for schools, including CE, deals & discounts, support for e-books, and grants • Staffed a virtual booth • Served as Silver Sponsor for conference ILA Virtual Conference • Presented/participated in programs on using data to tell your story and advocate for your library, effective library marketing campaigns, the "new L2," expanding library services to the unserved, and the importance of school librarians and the need for public and school library collaboration • Staffed a booth in virtual exhibit hall with 236 unique visitors • Sponsored President's Program IHLS Member Day 2020 • Exhibited and gave presentation about RAILS statewide programs, including Biblioboard, inkie.org, and Explore More Illinois

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	PrairieCat Users Group Day (PUG Day) • Presented sessions on the My Library Is… campaign and RAILS e-resources Reaching Forward (RF) and Reaching Forward South (RFS) • Presented programs on inkie.org and library trustees • Served as Gold-Level sponsor **Multitype Communication/Engagement** Used available type of library mailing lists to communicate system membership benefits and CE/networking opportunities for staff from all types of libraries Offered online "RAILS Refresher" to connect with school librarians one-on-one to provide information on RAILS programs/services of interest. Conducted 18 refresher visits. Presented programs/sponsored exhibit booths at conferences for different types of libraries as noted above See networking section above for other multitype engagement activities
Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and are helping to create the best possible future for all of our libraries	Continued to develop and foster a data culture at RAILS Continued to evaluate RAILS' programs/services to show their effectiveness and impact on members. Implemented changes as a result of these activities. Prioritized the following programs/services: • eRead Illinois and cooperative purchasing in general • CE and consulting • Delivery • Certification and membership standards • Unserved Worked with ILA, ISL, and IHLS on taking "deeper dives" into available data on Illinois libraries. Concentrated on school libraries as a first priority. Continued to solicit member feedback via RAILS communication tools, surveys, and member encounters as described elsewhere in this document. Implemented changes to RAILS programs/services based on member input as appropriate.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Recruit and engage a RAILS Board that is representative of the system membership and that creates and models best practices for board leadership	Communicated regularly with board through board mailing list and other means Conducted RAILS Board communication and engagement survey to determine how we could communicate more effectively with board members. Implemented findings and reported to board on status of implementation on a regular basis. Continued to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board. Worked with our EDI consultant to recruit more diverse candidates for open RAILS Board seats. Planned/implemented orientation session via Zoom for all new RAILS Board members. Invited existing board members to attend for a refresher. Kept board informed about important issues for RAILS and for libraries of all types Developed visibility plan to be implemented in FY 2022 to enhance member library knowledge of board members and their activities and to increase voter participation in future annual board elections
Ensure that all aspects of the RAILS organization use and model best practices in all that we do	Held annual meeting with colleagues at WiLS (formerly Wisconsin Library Services) via Zoom to exchange ideas and best practices Modeled effective internal EDI practices for members by sharing information on RAILS' staff initiative (see below) See other sections of this document for activities related to modeling best practices, including modeling innovative ways for members to share resources (BiblioBoard, Find More Illinois, Explore More Illinois, etc.); modeling effective ways to tell the library story; modeling effective ways to evaluate the impact of programs/services; etc.
Deliver on the promise of organizational excellence by being agile, innovative, future-oriented, and member-focused	**General** Received ILA's Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award for sustained activity and contributions having a lasting impact on librarianship. RAILS was nominated by a member library in part for: - Providing guidance during the pandemic and continuing to produce stellar products and resources during this time - Exemplary performance and constant support to Illinois libraries - Serving as an excellent model for library consortia across the country

RAILS FY 2021 Annual Report

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Support & Develop RAILS Staff Recruited RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and objectives Held monthly staff meetings to ensure that all staff were kept aware of the latest pandemic-related developments. Developed policies and procedures to keep staff safe in the rapidly changing COVID-19 environment. Continued to develop a RAILS Staff EDI Initiative - Worked with a consultant to develop a strategy and to create a staff-led climate team to work on ongoing issues - Coordinated and tailored EDI training for all staff Encouraged/supported professional development for staff. In lieu of an in-person RAILS staff development day, offered several virtual learning opportunities for RAILS staff, including a webinar on office safety and ergonomics, multiple webinars on wellness/health topics, and a presentation from two member libraries on library services during the pandemic. **Maintain Robust Technology Infrastructure** Ordered new staff computers and began the transition process Began transition to Office 365 Began transition to Zoom telephones
Engage in innovative projects on a statewide, national, and international level and help RAILS members model these projects for their community of users	**SimplyE** Continued to monitor developments with SimplyE open source e-reader and e-book discovery app. Attended monthly meetings with nationwide stakeholders to discuss technical issues and other developments, including future direction and development of SimplyE and the Palace Project through LYRASIS. See other sections of this document for additional information on innovative statewide projects, including BiblioBoard and inkie.org, MyLibraryIs…, L2, EDI initiatives, etc.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources to ensure maximum benefit to member libraries, library users, and Illinois taxpayers	Closely monitored RAILS investments and made changes as appropriate Continued to investigate and find efficiencies and cost savings, primarily through the budgeting and financial reporting processes, for RAILS operations
Maintain a research and development role to provide leadership and innovation to help members provide the best possible service to their customers	See other sections of this document for activities related to research and development, including: efforts to research available Illinois school library data for advocacy purposes; researching the latest developments on topics of vital importance to libraries (COVID-19, EDI, universal service, etc.) and providing information via the pulse pages on the RAILS website; and a variety of resource sharing initiatives (SimplyE, LASA/delivery research, etc.)

1.2   By 2022, libraries shall evaluate and report to the library system regarding the library's plans to provide and maintain access to its new acquisitions via a Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAPS) or a shared bibliographic database, if such access is not already available via a shared database. 23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030.200 (a) (2) (N).

At June 30, 2021, how many member library agencies provide and maintain access to their new acquisitions via an LLSAP, a shared integrated library system or other shared consortial catalog?

	Participation in an LLSAP or shared consortial catalog
Academic Library Agencies	106
Public Library Agencies	376
School Library Agencies	217
Special Library Agencies	105
TOTAL	**804**