

18 October 2021

**TO: RAILS Board of Directors**

**FROM: Deirdre Brennan**

**SUBJECT: Executive Director Report – October, 2021**

**Promote, support, and expand resource sharing to optimize use of tax dollars and other funding and help libraries share resources to the fullest extent possible**

### **Resource sharing**

Legislative proposals

Unfortunately, the ILA Executive Board did not vote to include the RAILS legislative proposals related to statewide databases, library cards for unserved residents, or removal of barriers for public library mergers, in their legislative agenda for this year. Their priorities are:

- Broadband access for all public libraries. All K-12 school buildings in the state are offered broadband via the state's Connect Illinois program; they are pursuing a similar provision of broadband to public libraries.
- Equitable pricing for e-books. The state of Maryland recently succeeded in passing legislation requiring “reasonable terms” for the licensing of electronic “literary products” to libraries. There are objections from publishers, so expect the cost and terms of e-books for libraries to be in the news more frequently.

It is unfortunate that they did not include our priorities and proposals, but they will certainly support them as we continue our advocacy. I will provide more information at the meeting.

### **Meeting with IHLS regarding vaccination and testing procedures**

Monica, Sam and I had an excellent meeting with Leslie Bednar and their Human Resources director to learn more about their recently implemented policy to require COVID-19 vaccinations for all employees, or biweekly testing. We have been discussing implementing these changes to our policy and procedures related to vaccination and will bring this to the board at the October meeting.

### **Universal Service**

As promised in my report last month, I have drafted a statement for the board to adopt calling for statewide collaboration and leadership to address the lack of universal public library service. This is on the agenda as a discussion and possible action item.

### **Library visits**

I had the great pleasure of visiting two libraries during the past month! I visited board members Karen and Alice at their libraries, Shorewood-Troy and Richton Park. It was great to talk to Karen and Alice about their library projects and priorities, meet some of the staff and get feedback about RAILS services.

### **Member Update**

We held a very well attended Member Update, with the main topic being our strategic plan. Stephanie Chase explained the process and took attendees through the town hall brainstorming sessions as well. It was great to hear all the positive comments about RAILS, especially our leadership during the pandemic, and to listen to member ideas about future RAILS goals.

**Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story**

### **AISLE and school libraries**

Our monthly meetings continue to be extremely productive. This month, we discussed the school library data collection project and Mary Jo Matousek shared an [infographic](#) that shows the decline in school libraries and librarians over the past decade. We have a draft job description for a Research Assistant to help with data collection for school libraries. We will also be meeting soon with staff from IHLS and AISLE to develop questions about school libraries and staffing that will be included in certification in 2022.

**Help libraries be the best they can be**

### **Consulting, continuing education services**

As part of the EDI report that is part of this month's agenda, you will hear about the great work that our Consulting and Continuing Education department is doing to help libraries become more knowledgeable about EDI. They have awarded [training grants](#) to libraries to offer and attend programs and have developed a robust array of RAILS training sessions for all of our members.

**Prepare libraries for the future**

### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion update**

You will be hearing a full report from Monica and Joe about all of our activities and initiatives, and there are a LOT, both internally as we continue work on our own culture, and with our board committee that is working on resources for members.

**Aim to be the best library system in the country**

### **Recruitment of new RAILS Director of Finance**

Interviews are scheduled for first part of November. We hope to complete the process before December 1.

### **Strategic plan**

Monica will give a full report at the board meeting. We have had excellent town hall sessions with members and RAILS staff; it's been great to see board members and steering committee members attending the sessions as well. As I said earlier in this report, it's been very satisfying to hear all the comments from members about RAILS services, especially during the pandemic. We really had an important impact. We also met with Stephanie and Biz Lindsay-Ryan to ensure that our EDI and strategic planning activities and goals are aligned. We all agreed to meet regularly.

### **Pillar Award**

We were very pleased to be given the Pillar Award by AISLE, in conjunction with IHLS. I am looking forward to attending their in-person conference in Champaign on November 8 and 9. The award honors "distinguished and exceptional service and contributions to AISLE and the school library community."

### **Grant Awards from ISL**

We received \$114K in grant funding from the state library to support our work on L2 and specialized cataloging services.

Looking ahead to November:

A reminder that the board meeting will be a week earlier than usual due to the Thanksgiving holiday

Service of the Month – How RAILS engages staff at all levels from all types of libraries  
Board development topic – Academic library trends and challenges – Jennifer McIntosh

## This Month at RAILS – October 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:

#### **Specialized Statewide Cataloging Support Program**

RAILS received a grant from the Illinois State Library to catalog non-Latin and Asian materials at no charge to Illinois library system members. The program is in the pilot project phase and will be expanded to libraries statewide based on the results of the pilot. Stay tuned to the weekly *RAILS E-News* for details.

#### **Help RAILS Help Libraries of All Types Prove Their Value**

RAILS started the [My Library Is... campaign](#) in 2019 in direct response to numerous requests from academic, public, school, and specialized library staff for help proving their value to different stakeholders. To ensure that the campaign meets library needs moving forward, RAILS will conduct four separate surveys, one for each library type. All library staff from any RAILS library are invited to respond. Watch for more details in the weekly *RAILS E-News*.

#### **Engage with RAILS at November AISLE Conference**

RAILS will have a booth at the [Association of Illinois School Library Educators \(AISLE\) Conference](#), in Champaign, November 8-9. We have not exhibited in person since February 2020, and are looking forward to engaging with our members "live!" If you are attending the conference, stop by the booth to find out what RAILS has to offer especially for school libraries.

## ***Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing***

### **Leading/Working with Libraries to Expand Resource Sharing**

#### **Specialized Statewide Cataloging Support Program**

Thanks to a grant from the Illinois State Library, RAILS is establishing a specialized statewide cataloging support program to provide supplementary cataloging services for non-Latin and Asian materials at no charge to Illinois library system members. We are kicking off the program with a pilot project involving different types of libraries. RAILS will use the results of the pilot to expand the program to libraries statewide.

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

#### **BiblioBoard Restructuring**

RAILS will be restructuring the resources available on the [BiblioBoard platform](#). Many of the collections currently available via BiblioBoard will be transferred to [eRead Illinois Axis 360](#), where they will be available for simultaneous use. We will refocus the remaining collections on content created in Illinois communities by Illinois authors/ creators.

We are making these changes in response to where we see the most user engagement with BiblioBoard resources. The rebranded instance will connect directly to [inkie.org](http://inkie.org).

#### **eRead Illinois Grant Update**

RAILS received the final payment of \$69,309.88 from the Illinois State Library for our eRead Illinois Grant. We received the \$125,000 grant in August 2020 to purchase e-books and e-audiobooks for K-12 users of [eRead Illinois](#).



The next phase of the grant project will focus on an evaluation of trends observed with the eRead Illinois collection throughout the grant period.

#### **November eRead Illinois Webinar for School Librarians**

RAILS school library members who participate in [eRead Illinois Axis 360](#) are invited to our "Optimizing and Customizing Axis 360 for Schools" webinar to find out how to get the most out of the platform. Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, is one of the presenters.

School librarians can register for one of two identical sessions:

- Tuesday, November 16, 4 p.m.
- Thursday, November 18, 4 p.m.

#### **Other eRead Illinois News**

RAILS staff have been analyzing the [eRead Illinois](#) fee structure. The results of this analysis will help inform future development opportunities.

RAILS staff also met with Baker & Taylor (B&T) representatives at Burr Ridge on September 28 to discuss general RAILS/B&T business. (B&T is the vendor for eRead Illinois.)

### System E-Resources Program for School Libraries Recap

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, and Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources and Programs, along with ILHS and AISLE staff, presented at a program on library system e-resources and e-content available to school libraries on September 23. About 60 signed up for the program. A recording is available on the [RAILS website](#).

### 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 September and for FY 2022 thus far.

#### eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
September 2021	27,772	16,601	44,373
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	68,902	45,716	114,618

#### BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
September 2021	1,556
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	3,366

### Explore More Illinois Update

RAILS continues to recruit statewide library participants and attractions for our [Explore More](#)



[Illinois](#) online cultural pass program. As of this writing, 393 Illinois libraries participate (319 RAILS and 74 IHLS member libraries), and there are 29 attractions. See [complete list](#) of attractions.

## Providing Greater Purchasing Power

### Career Online High School Update

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program that enables libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas along with career certificates in one of 10 high-demand employment fields. RAILS subsidizes the cost of the platform, which includes extensive training for participating staff, implementation, and student recruitment support. Scholarships are discounted and no minimum purchases are required.

The following table provides the latest information on the program.

Total Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Graduation Rate
269	131	51	60%/53%

### Other RAILS Discount News

RAILS developed a vendor survey to expedite communications regarding technical requirements for vendors offering potential discounted pricing to members. The survey was introduced to the LLSAP managers for their feedback in late September. It will primarily be used as a tool to determine the viability of potential resources for LLSAP members.

Leila Heath, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs, presented at the North Suburban Conference of High School Librarians on September 29. The group of 36 had a robust discussion about needs, obstacles and successes related to group discounts. They also expressed interest in a follow-up meeting dedicated to this topic.

## Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

### RAILS Assists ILA Small & Rural Libraries Forum

RAILS is in the process of establishing an email list for the Illinois Library Association's Small & Rural Libraries Forum and helping them to acquire a [Zoom license through RAILS](#). You can read more about this group in this recent [My Library Is... blog post](#).

## Telling the Library Story

### Helping Members Tell Their Story



### Determining the Future Direction of the My Library Is... Campaign

RAILS started the [My Library Is... campaign](#) in 2019 to help libraries of all types prove their value to different stakeholders. To help ensure that the campaign meets library needs moving forward, we are conducting four separate surveys targeted at our academic, public, school, and specialized library members.

Members from each library type previewed the surveys, including several RAILS Board members! We will use the survey results to make changes to the My Library Is... program.

## Advocating for Libraries

### October 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 October included:

- Upcoming in-person AISLE conference in November in Champaign
- Illinois library legislative update
- Ongoing conversation about school library data
- School library barriers to reciprocal borrowing
- Upcoming My Library Is... survey for school libraries (see above)

The next meeting is scheduled for November 2.

## Helping Libraries Be the Best They Can Be

### Ensuring Ongoing Library Staff Development

#### Recent RAILS CE Highlight

One recent CE event of note was the two-part webinar “Powerful Presentations: Data Visualization Techniques for Delivering Effective Slideshows,” conducted by Ann Emery of Depict Data Studio. Approximately 100 RAILS members registered for the event, which included the opportunity for attendees to use what they learned during the first session and report back at the second session. RAILS received several positive comments on the series, including this attendee testimonial:

*I recently took a two-part webinar you gave for RAILS libraries on Powerful Presentations. During the second webinar, when we broke into small groups, I showed my updated slide deck, which was created with all the information we learned during the first webinar. My colleague and I gave the presentation at our board meeting last night, and they were blown away! The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One of the board members said it was a fantastic use of data and analytics, and he personally feels more confident in our library collection as a result of the presentation. I have no doubt that it was the skills we learned in the webinar on better ways to present data and information that helped generate that reaction.*

A [recording of this presentation](#) is available in the RAILS CE Archives.

#### Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights

Upcoming CE webinars of interest to a variety of staff from different library types include:



- [“Working with the Media Made Easy”](#) – October 28, 10:30 a.m. - noon
- [“Telling Your Library Story”](#) – October 28, 1- 3 p.m. (3-part series)
- [“Technology Assessment and Purchasing Guide”](#) – November 8, 10 a.m. - noon
- [“Harm and Healing in the Library”](#) – November 9, 10 – 11 a.m.
- [“Building African American, African, and Caribbean Collections”](#) – November 15, 2 – 3 p.m.
- [“Stop, Look, Listen: Helping Students Spot the Fakes”](#) – November 16, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

## ***Aiming to Be the Best Library System***

### **Member Communication/Engagement**

#### **Recap of September 30 RAILS Member Update**

There were 171 attendees at the September 30 RAILS Member Update. Topics included the new RAILS strategic plan, our new cataloging program covering non-Latin and Asian languages (see above), and much more. A [recording is available](#) on the RAILS website.

#### **RAILS at November Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE)**

RAILS is a Gold Sponsor for the [AISLE Conference](#), and we will have an in-person booth at the conference in Champaign on November 8-9. We have not exhibited in person since February 2020!

#### **RAILS at Health Science Librarians of Illinois (HSLI) Conference**

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, will give a presentation about RAILS at the virtual [Health Science Librarians of Illinois \(HSLI\) Conference](#), October 27-29. Dan will speak at the business meeting scheduled for Friday, October 29 at 11 a.m.

### **RAILS Staff News**

Brian Smith, RAILS Applications & Web Developer, will talk about RAILS’ use of the Intercept events calendar for L2 as a panelist at Aten’s October 27 lunchtime webinar: [“Intercept: the Open Source Solution to Event Management.”](#) The Aten Design Group is the company RAILS worked with on our grant project to replace the [L2 Library Directory & Learning Calendar](#).

# 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

