

12 November 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

Library visits

Monica and I visited Peoria Public Library and Robin Helenthal while we were “in the neighborhood” attending AISLE in Champaign. We had a wide ranging discussion about her role as Collection Development Manager at PPL, the RAILS strategic planning process and the Advocacy Committee. Robin has agreed to be the chair of the committee and made the excellent suggestion that the new ILA Advocacy Toolkit be presented at a future committee meeting.

Monica and I also stopped by to see the new East Peoria Hub building and got the grand tour from Kendal and Mark. It’s certainly smaller than the previous location, but the design seems to work well for the administrative staff and the delivery area is quite large.

We plan to visit more libraries soon. We have started receiving requests for visits, particularly from small and rural libraries.

AISLE conference

Speaking of the AISLE conference, it was held November 7-9 in Champaign and it was a marvelous experience! Attendance was excellent (I think around 250); everyone was masked up; and everyone was absolutely delighted to see people in person again. We had a lot of booth activity, especially on Monday. It was really great to meet with our school library members and be able to talk directly with them about their needs. It was also very rewarding to receive the Pillar Award and to hear the many stories about how important RAILS services have been to school libraries over the past year or two.

OCLC Global Council

I was elected to a seat on the OCLC Global Council. I hope I can represent member needs – Illinois libraries spend \$5 million on OCLC services annually and many of them don't have a lot to show for it. I was part of a task force for ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) that developed a detailed report that called for more transparent and equitable pricing of OCLC products, as well as greater interoperability with other vendors and products.

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 shared the job description for the Data Research Assistant position that we have posted, and discussed potential questions specifically about school libraries that will be included in certification. So, I think we are making headway in our data collection project.

Help libraries be the best they can be

Consulting, continuing education services

I received another request this month for assistance with strategic planning. I believe it is essential that libraries of all types and sizes have a strategic plan. We need to find a way to be able to offer this assistance, especially for small libraries that cannot afford to hire a consultant.

I also received a call from Gayle Nelson, the Executive Director of the Alliance for Human Services in Lake County. From talking with her, it sounds like her organization functions similarly to RAILS, for human service professionals in Lake County. We are going to investigate whether the Alliance might be able to offer assistance to libraries that cannot afford to employ social workers. This kind of assistance has been requested repeatedly by libraries but we did not have an option to offer them. I see this as similar to the relationship we have with HRSource.

Prepare libraries for the future

CARLI Grant and Podcast

CARLI is the Consortium for Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois. They recently received a grant to create open textbooks. The [press release](#) is here. This is very important and exciting news for libraries but especially for college students. I did a podcast with Anne Craig, the Senior Director of CARLI, and Michelle Leigh, the SCOERS project manager, that should be available soon. RAILS is one of the partner agencies for the project.

Aim to be the best library system in the country

Recruitment of new RAILS Director of Finance

Final interviews are scheduled for November 12.

Strategic planning update

We will again spend time at the board meeting on our strategic plan. The Steering Committee recently met to develop a new mission statement for RAILS. It was an excellent session and you will hear more soon.

Reminder – no Board meeting in December.

This Month at RAILS – November 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:

RAILS to Spotlight Specialized Libraries

As part of the [My Library Is... campaign](#), RAILS is starting a new project to [spotlight specialized libraries](#). Through a series of short video interviews, specialized libraries will have an opportunity to tell their story and showcase the valuable work they do. Videos will be promoted via the My Library Is... website.

RAILS is currently looking for specialized libraries to participate. Please spread the word to anyone you know who works at a RAILS specialized library and invite them to contact Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, for more details.

My Library Is... Survey Reminder

RAILS is conducting separate surveys of our four types of libraries to determine the future direction of our [My Library Is... campaign](#). The campaign is designed to help library staff justify the need for more funding/staffing, attract new library users, promote the library's role in identifying fake news, show why libraries are needed more than ever in the internet age, and more.

Any interested staff member at any RAILS or IHLS library is invited to complete the survey for their type of library:

- [Academic Library Survey](#)
- [Public Library Survey](#)
- [School Library Survey](#)
- [Specialized Library Survey](#)

RAILS Support for Networking Groups

RAILS recently helped form a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) in Metadata Networking Group](#) to create and maintain more equitable, diverse, and inclusive metadata content. The group is open to library staff from all types and sizes of libraries statewide.

RAILS offers a [number of services](#) for member networking groups, including providing email lists and Zoom meeting licenses, making it possible for them to schedule meetings via L2, and promoting their activities via our website and weekly *E-News* as possible.

Promoting/Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing

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

BiblioBoard Update

As mentioned last month, RAILS is restructuring our BiblioBoard resources. Some collections will be transferred to eRead Illinois. Remaining collections will focus on content created in Illinois communities. The rebranded instance will connect directly to inkie.org.



RAILS staff updated the inkie.org website to reflect the upcoming changes. We are working on an announcement for member libraries, and also discussed the changes with IHLS at a statewide services meeting in October.

eRead Illinois Update

RAILS staff worked with Baker & Taylor (our eRead Illinois vendor) on the migration of content from the BiblioBoard platform to the [eRead Illinois](#) Axis 360 platform. The nearly 5,000 simultaneous-use titles that are moving include educational e-books for young readers, as well as titles focused on health, wellness, civil rights, contemporary nonfiction, and selections from the Indie Author Project Select self-published fiction collection.



Use of RAILS E-Resources

The following tables show the use of the [eRead Illinois](#) Axis 360 collection and the [BiblioBoard Library](#) in October and for FY 2022 thus far.

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-books	Audiobooks	Total
October 2021	26,246	16,211	42,457
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	95,147	61,926	157,073

BiblioBoard Views

Time Period	Number of Views
October 2021	1,160
FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)	4,526

Explore More Illinois Update

The Lansing Historical Society Museum and the City Lit Theater of Chicago joined our [Explore More Illinois](#) online cultural pass program in October. We've also started inviting libraries to create an offer in Explore More Illinois for cafes, bookstores, ongoing book sales, or gift stores. Fox River Grove Memorial Library is the first library to offer a discount for its ongoing book sale.



As of November 2, 398 Illinois libraries participate in the program (320 RAILS and 78 IHLS member libraries), and there are 32 attractions. See [complete list](#) of attractions.

Recent Virtual Conferences

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, and Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources and Programs, attended the Charleston Conference virtually in November. This annual conference discusses issues of importance to librarians, publishers, and resource managers.

Leila Heath attended the Library Leader's Digital Conference in October. The conference included a panel discussion about e-content challenges and successes.

Providing Greater Purchasing Power

BTCat Discount for RAILS Public and Specialized Libraries

RAILS public and specialized libraries are eligible for discounted pricing for [BTCat](#), a state-of-the-art library cataloging utility and database that provides efficient and easy to use features for any size library. Two informational webinars were offered in November and free trials are available for RAILS members.

BookBrowse for Libraries Discount

RAILS has negotiated advantageous pricing for [BookBrowse for Libraries](#), an award-winning readers' advisory resource for public libraries. BookBrowse features curated contemporary book recommendations and reading and book club resources. Several RAILS libraries subscribe to BookBrowse and free trials are available for RAILS members. Three informational webinars were offered in November.

Swank Group Purchase Sign-Up through December 31

RAILS public libraries are eligible for a special discounted rate for the annual [Swank](#) Movie Licensing USA public performance license. The license allows unlimited showings of thousands of movies, from classics to new releases. Select movies for outdoor viewings are also included for a limited time. Swank also provides materials to help promote events and engage patrons.

RAILS public libraries currently not covered by a Swank license must sign up for the group purchase by December 31, 2021. The [Swank sign-up form and pricing are available on the Deals & Discounts page](#). The license is valid from January 1 - December 31, 2022.

Building Collaborative Relationships & Fostering Networking

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Metadata Networking Group

RAILS helped form a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) in Metadata Networking Group](#) to create and maintain more equitable, diverse, and inclusive metadata content. The group will host regular discussions on DEI topics related to catalog data and is open to library staff from all types and sizes of libraries statewide.

RAILS established a mailing list for the group and is providing them with a [Zoom account](#) at no cost to them. RAILS is also helping to publicize the group and they will be able to post their meetings in L2. Nancy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, will work closely with the group on an ongoing basis.

Telling the Library Story

Helping Members Tell Their Story



RAILS to Spotlight Specialized Libraries

As part of the [My Library Is... campaign](#), RAILS is starting a new project to [spotlight specialized libraries](#). Through a series of short video interviews, specialized libraries will have an opportunity to tell their story and showcase the valuable work they do. RAILS will upload the videos to our YouTube page and post them to the My Library Is... [Sharing Showcase](#) and [blog](#).

RAILS is currently looking for specialized libraries to participate in the project. Interested libraries can [contact Dan Bostrom](#), RAILS Member Engagement Manager.

My Library Is... Survey Reminder

RAILS is conducting [surveys of our four types of libraries](#), to determine how we can best help them tell their stories and demonstrate their value to important stakeholders via the [My Library Is... campaign](#). Any interested library staff member at any RAILS or IHLS library is invited to complete the survey. We will use the results to make changes to the My Library Is... campaign as appropriate.

RAILS Helps Expand Access to Public Libraries via Public Transportation

The directors of Fremont Public Library and Highland Park Public Library asked RAILS for help getting more public libraries listed on the 2022 Pace Suburban Bus Map. Using L2, RAILS staff developed a list of libraries near a bus line by county. We sent those libraries a request asking them to enter their information on an [online form](#).

Highland Park Public Library staff will compile the information and send it to Pace. The updated Pace map will promote the use of area public libraries and potentially bring unserved individuals into public libraries near Pace bus routes.

Advocating for Libraries

November 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 November included:

- AISLE and ILA conference updates
- Library legislation update
- Continued discussion of collecting data on Illinois school libraries to help with advocacy efforts
- Continued discussion of FOIA requests regarding school library collections
- My Library Is... survey for school libraries
- RAILS' November 16 "[Stop, Look, Listen: Helping Students Spot the Fakes](#)" media literacy webinar

The next meeting is scheduled for December 7.

Aiming to Be the Best Library System

Member Communication/Engagement

RAILS at Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Conference

RAILS had our first in-person booth since February 2020 at the AISLE conference in Champaign, November 8-9. Approximately 129 Illinois school library staff members visited the booth for a chance to spin our famous RAILS wheel and to hear more about the services we offer for schools. We also developed a special [online handout](#) highlighting those services.

Popular topics of conversation were [eRead Illinois](#), [inkie.org](#), and the [My Library Is... campaign](#), among others. Many booth visitors commented on how much they appreciate RAILS and all we are doing to reach out to school libraries.

Anna Behm, RAILS E-Content Specialist, also gave a demo about eRead Illinois and other RAILS programs/services for schools at the conference.

Several RAILS staff members attended the conference in person, including Deirdre Brennan, Executive Director; Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist; Joe Filapek, Director of Consulting & Continuing Education; Monica Harris, Associate Executive Director; Brian Smith, Applications & Web Developer; Mary Witt, Director of Marketing & Communications; and Nicole Zimmermann, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist.

Recent RAILS Virtual Presentations

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, gave three virtual presentations about RAILS recently, including:

- RAILS update at the fall 2021 LIBRAS Director’s meeting. [LIBRAS, Inc.](#) is a consortium of 20 private college and university libraries located in the Chicago metropolitan area that focuses on promoting library cooperation, continuing education, networking, and the sharing of knowledge. Approximately 20 people participated.
- “What is RAILS? Library Systems and More” presentation to a school libraries class at Dominican University. Approximately 12 students attended. Erin Wyatt, a school librarian at Libertyville School District 70 invited Dan to give the presentation.
- Presentation about RAILS at the Health Science Librarians of Illinois (HSLI) Conference. Approximately 30 people attended.

Modeling Best Practices & Innovation

Human Resources App Development

After a period of development and testing, RAILS launched a new HR App this month. The app will streamline the entire RAILS recruitment process, eliminate a lot of manual work, and save administrative staff time. Hiring managers will receive training on the new app on a case-by-case basis as they have a new position to fill.

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

