



125 Tower Drive  
Burr Ridge, IL 60513  
630.734.5000  
railslibraries.info

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## Associate Executive Director Report

Please note that we have updated the format of this report to focus on our new strategic plan goals.

### *Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing*

Deirdre and I focused on the new **Strategic Plan** in the newest episode of [Sparks](#), the RAILS podcast. We cover the strategy of picking a consultant, helpful virtual tools, member feedback, and more about the nuances of conducting a strategic planning process during a pandemic.

The **LLSAP Sustainability Working Group** (LSWG) is continuing to meet. Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) Executive Director Leslie Bednar also led a meeting on February 22 that focused on exploring the future of statewide resource sharing. Representatives from IHLS, the Illinois State Library (ISL), and RAILS attended, along with representatives from CARLI, CCS, SHARE, SWAN, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River, and RSA. There was continued discussion about the possibility of exploring a statewide ILS. The RAILS Board Consortia Committee LLSAP Sustainability Working Group is now seeking proposals from consultants interested in conducting an assessment into which multitype resource sharing among Illinois libraries could be done more efficiently. The RAILS Board Consortia Committee LLSAP Sustainability Working Group meets next on Monday, March 21.

We are beginning work on our Strategic Plan action plan in conjunction with the **FY 2023 Area & Per Capita Grant** application Operational Plan. The RAILS Board can expect to see a draft of the plan in April.

### *Models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion*

The Executive Committee has begun the process of filling the At-Large seat **vacancy**. Self nominations were due by February 23, and several strong applications were received. The selection process is currently underway by the Executive Committee, and they are expected to select a candidate to recommend to the board at the April meeting.

RAILS is offering a continuing education program originally suggested by the RAILS Board Equity Diversity and Inclusion committee, **Upstander Intervention in Action**, on [Wednesday, March 16](#). This interactive workshop will help attendees to build awareness and provide tools for safe and effective ways to stand up and intervene.

## *Assist member libraries in preparing for the future*

I've had the privilege of attending all but one of the recent series of **ILA Legislative meetups**. It was wonderful to hear all the inspiring and innovative stories that ILA compiled from all around Illinois. Many legislators expressed support for Illinois libraries and the legislative initiatives shared by ILA. Both legislators and attendees expressed hope that the meetups can return to in person next year. Huge thanks to the RAILS Board members who attended these events this winter.

## *Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community*

In Illinois legislative news, **Senate Bill 3497**, which amends the Illinois Local Library Act and the Public Library District Act of 1991 to allow library boards to adopt regulations waiving the nonresident fee for persons under the age of 18, passed out of the Senate with a 52-0 vote in late February. It now moves to the House with a hearing expected for mid-March. The bill, which was originally introduced by Senator Laura Murphy, is not a mandate and allows for local control by boards to determine how they would like to approach the issue. It also allows for participation in expanded service by a board vote rather than relying on Intergovernmental agreements or requiring students to show paperwork confirming free or reduced lunch participation. If passed, the bill would be effective immediately.

Illinois Library Association (ILA) Executive Director Diane Foote announced her impending **retirement** earlier this week. Diane expressed her thanks and appreciation for a wonderful experience with ILA in a letter to the ILA membership on Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>. She has noted that the ILA Executive Committee and full Executive Board will begin to discuss a smooth transition plan this month. We are thankful to Diane Foote for her leadership and partnership with RAILS and on behalf of all Illinois libraries. She will be missed and we wish her all the best.

At the board meeting we will also introduce Elena Mendoza, who has recently joined RAILS as a **staff accountant**. We also have programs on our Explore More Illinois program with Jessica Barnes and Dan Bostrom and Halle Cox will give us an overview of the current view for special libraries.

Looking ahead to April, we will have development presentations about OERs (Open Educational Resources) with Jennifer McIntosh and Dr. Denise Coate and RAILS Discounts and Group Purchase programs.



## This Month at RAILS – March 2022

### 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.

#### **RAILS Launches Materials Challenges Pulse Page**

Many RAILS libraries are currently facing challenges to materials in the library collection. RAILS developed a [Materials Challenges](#) Pulse Page to help with these challenges. The page includes upcoming RAILS events, CE opportunities, and other helpful resources. It will be of value to staff from any library type looking for guidance on this issue.

RAILS will continue to update the page and invites members to contribute suggestions for additional resources using the Comments field.

#### **Second Round of My Library Is Grants for School Libraries Now Open**

RAILS school libraries are invited to apply for [grants of up to \\$5,000](#) for projects that will help them tell their stories and increase their visibility in their schools and communities. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate the impact their projects will have on their diverse student populations, teachers, parents, and administrators. The application deadline is April 18, 2022.

#### **RAILS Online Roundtable: Go-To Data Resources**

Learn more about how to use publicly available datasets like maps and the Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR) more effectively at a [RAILS Roundtable](#) on Thursday, April 7, from 2 -3 p.m. Attendees will be encouraged to share their own go-to data resources that they have found to be helpful in their work.

## Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

### **RAILS Launches Materials Challenges Pulse Page**

RAILS has a new [Materials Challenges](#) Pulse Page on our website to help libraries respond to the growing number of challenges to materials in their collections. The page includes:

- AISLE statement against censorship in school libraries and details on AISLE’s webinar series on material challenges in schools
- RAILS events on materials challenges, including the April 5 webinar on censorship
- Online resources from the Illinois Library Association, American Library Association, and other organizations providing best practices and guidance on how to handle censorship attempts
- Links to upcoming and recorded CE events

While many resources may be specific to school libraries, this pulse page will be of value to any library type looking for guidance on material challenges. RAILS staff will continually update the page and RAILS members are invited to add suggestions for resources via the Comments field at the bottom of the page.

### **RAILS Online Roundtable: Ins and Outs of Material Challenges**

The March 17 RAILS Online Roundtable on the “[Ins and Outs of a Material Challenge](#)” features three panelists providing different perspectives on planning, policies, and addressing materials challenges. A recording of the roundtable will be posted to the [RAILS YouTube page](#) when available.

### **RAILS Online Roundtable: Go-To Data Resources**

On [Thursday, April 7](#) from 2 – 3 p.m., Grant Halter, RAILS Data Analysis Manager, will discuss how Illinois public library staff can integrate publicly-available data sets like maps and the [Illinois Public Library Annual Report](#) (IPLAR) into their work. Attendees are encouraged to share their own go-to data resources. The roundtable will be recorded and posted on the [RAILS YouTube page](#) when available.

### **RAILS Engages School Library Staff at IDEAcn Conference**

Nicole Zimmermann, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, and Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, staffed the RAILS booth at the [IDEAcn](#) (Illinois Digital Educators Alliance Conference) in Schaumburg in February. They engaged with approximately 120 visitors, including teachers and technology staff who were very interested to learn more about RAILS and who promised to bring the information back to their school librarian.

### **RAILS Presence at Kane County Institute Day**

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, staffed a table at the March 4 Kane County Institute Day. The one-day teacher training event is run by the Kane County Regional Office of Education and provided an opportunity for RAILS to connect with teachers, principals, librarians, and other school staff about eRead Illinois, Inkie.org, continuing education, grants, and more.

## Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

## ConsortiaManager Update

ConsortiaManager (CM) is an online resource designed specifically for consortia that will help RAILS increase efficiency, capacity, and member communications related to our group purchases. RAILS staff continue to build the content and supporting documents needed to create a robust site for those managing and participating in RAILS discount offerings.

Our CM vendor made several modifications to accommodate the complexity of the RAILS environment, including increasing processing speed, adding various filtering options and metadata fields, and reordering workflows to better reflect RAILS procedures. The build/customize process will continue through the spring.

## Career Online High School (COHS) Update

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program. The program enables libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas and career certificates in high-demand employment fields. Smart Horizons Career Online Education, the COHS vendor, recently added a Manufacturing Track to the Career Certificate Portfolio. RAILS subsidizes the cost of the platform.

### COHS Stats as of March 3, 2022

Total Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Number of Students in the Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
302	143	37	61%/53%

**Work collaboratively to identify and support shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing**

## Find More Illinois Welcomes New Libraries

[Find More Illinois](#) connects participating standalone and shared online catalogs.

Library patrons can quickly search all these catalogs in a single search. Patrons and staff at participating libraries can also place interlibrary loan requests in the same search session.

The more libraries that participate in Find More Illinois, the more robust and complete a resource it will be. For this reason, RAILS wants to significantly grow the number of participating libraries.



Welcome to these libraries that recently joined Find More Illinois: DeKalb Public Library, Helen Plum Library (Lombard), Highwood Public Library, Knoxville Community Unit School District 200, Ohio Public Library District, Skokie Public Library, and Wheaton Public Library. In addition, the six libraries in the Pinnacle Library Cooperative are joining together: Fountaindale Public Library District, Joliet Public Library, Lemont Public Library District, Plainfield Public Library District, Shorewood-Troy Public Library District, and White Oak Library District.

## Use of RAILS E-Resources

### eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
February 2022	23,566	14,713	38,279
Fiscal Year to Date	192,956	122,611	315,567

## Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
February 2022	749
Fiscal Year to Date	9,758

## Explore More Illinois Online Cultural and Recreational Pass Program Update

RAILS is running a contest to encourage libraries to suggest attractions for [Explore More Illinois](#). Libraries can [submit attraction suggestions](#) between March 1 and May 31. For every suggestion that results in an additional Explore More attraction by August 15, the library will receive one entry into a raffle for lunch for library staff. The Quipu Group, our software vendor, is sponsoring the contest. There was an amazing response in the first week, with more than 40 attractions submitted. [Get more information](#).



In other Explore More Illinois news, we continue to work with Illinois Central College (ICC) on the community college pilot program. ICC library staff and student employees are doing a beta test and ICC will create marketing materials for their users.

## *Models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion*

### **RAILS Staff Member Awarded ILA Inclusive Travel Grant for National Conference**

Nincy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, was awarded one of [five grants of \\$1,000 each](#) for Illinois librarians and library staff from populations underrepresented in librarianship to attend a national conference of their choice. Nincy will attend the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color in St. Pete Beach, Florida in October.

## *Assist member libraries in preparing for the future*

### **Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value**



### **RAILS School Libraries Encouraged to Apply for My Library Is... Grant**

Applications are now open for the [2022 My Library Is... Grants for School Libraries](#). These grants are designed to help school libraries tell their story and advance projects that will help them achieve maximum visibility in their schools and communities.

This is the second year these grants have focused on school libraries. In FY 2021, RAILS funded 14 projects at a total cost of over \$13,000. This year, we are raising the individual grant limit from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Applicants are also required to include a statement of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in their application. The deadline is Monday, April 18, 2022.

## New Specialized Library Spotlights

RAILS continues to produce Specialized Library Spotlight videos to highlight the work of specialized libraries and help them tell their stories. Recent additions to the series include:

- [MacArthur Foundation](#)
- [Resource Center at the Old Town School of Folk Music](#)

If you know of a specialized library that would make a good spotlight candidate, contact [communications@railslibraries.info](mailto:communications@railslibraries.info).

*Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community*

## Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

### March 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 at the March meeting included:

- Continued discussion about efforts to gather better data about Illinois school libraries, including Dominican University's school data project and the introduction of Janette Derucki, RAILS' Data Research Assistant, who is helping us with the project
- Materials challenges, including [AISLE's CE events](#) to help school libraries deal with challenges
- Legislative update from ILA
- [Innovative Approaches to Literacy grant program](#)
- [My Library Is grants](#) for school libraries
- New deals and discounts for school libraries

### Monica Harris Appointed to LIRA Executive Committee

Monica Harris, RAILS Associate Executive Director, was named Treasurer of the [Libraries of Illinois Risk Agency](#) (LIRA) in February 2022. Her term extends through December 2024.

### Time Running Out for RAILS Libraries to Complete Online Certification Process

All RAILS libraries must complete the [online certification process](#) by March 31 to continue to be eligible to receive RAILS services (including delivery) and Illinois State Library grants. The table below shows the number of RAILS libraries of all types that have completed the entire certification process.

Library Type	Total #	# Completing Certification
Academic	117	<b>88</b>
Public	412	<b>348</b>
School	558	<b>429</b>
Special	178	<b>103</b>

## 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



