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Executive Director Report, May 2022

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

As I reported last month, Anne Slaughter and I have reviewed the three proposals we received from consultants for an assessment into ways in which multitype resource sharing among libraries in Illinois could be done more efficiently and economically and provide better services and better use of tax dollars. We also met this week with Greg McCormick and Leslie Bednar to discuss the proposals. We have not been able to find a time for the LLSAP sustainability working group to meet until July so this project is on hold right now.

Thanks to our libraries for their participation in the quarterly delivery count. We do an actual count of items in delivery during one week in each quarter of the year. We appreciate our member library assistance with this count as it is very important in determining the actual volume of delivery flowing through each route and hub. It is essential for budgeting and route optimization, the best use of tax dollars and, ultimately, the best service to members and library patrons.

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

Our annual board election is underway, ending on May 20. We are very pleased with the diversity of the candidates this year and thank the Nominating Committee for their hard work. 1/3 of library staff candidates hold positions other than library director, and 29% of all candidates' race/ethnicity is non-white. We are certainly making progress, but much work remains to be done. When the new fiscal year starts and a new policy committee is appointed, they will begin work on changes to the board election that will assist in making the board more diverse.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

My latest *Sparks* podcast featured Grant Halter, Data Analysis Manager. We talked about using data to show the value of the library. Many of our members have been requesting information and assistance on using data for advocacy purposes.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

The school data project is continuing. Janette Derucki makes regular presentations of progress and findings at our monthly meetings with AISLE, ILA, ISL and IHLS. We all agree that the results of the project will be extremely helpful in illustrating the plight of school libraries and librarians. We also hope to analyze the relationship between school libraries with qualified teacher/librarians and student academic success.

Kara Thorstenson, director of school libraries for the Chicago Public Schools, has joined these meetings. She is very interested in RAILS adding the CPS libraries to our research project.

The Governor has signed the expansion of Cards for Kids! [Here](#) is the full legislative history for Public Act 102-0843.

RAILS Staff News

We have had a lot of changes in our Accounting Department due to retirements. Sharon Swanson is doing an outstanding job as Finance Director. During her short tenure (since the end of January) she has hired two new staff members and promoted Deborah Mitchener, all while learning her new job and tackling the annual RAILS budget. Bill Goetz is also retiring later this summer, so another round of interviews is beginning to fill his position.

We are hoping to have an in-person Staff Development Day this year for all RAILS staff. Joe Filapek is recruiting a planning team. The focus this year will be on reunion, meeting new faces and having fun.



This Month at RAILS – May 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. Here are this month's top three:

Take the RAILS #CollectionChallenge

RAILS' #CollectionChallenge features a [series of social media prompts](#) (two per month) to encourage staff from all types of libraries to show off their library collection in different categories (largest item, most circulated item, heaviest item, etc.). Libraries are asked to share photos/videos via Twitter and Instagram using #CollectionChallenge when they post. Twitter and Instagram users can view ongoing contributions using this hashtag as well.

RAILS Board and Member Library Staff Encouraged to Complete Website Survey

RAILS is in the process of redesigning and rebuilding [our website](#). To make the site as useful as possible for all levels of staff at all types of RAILS libraries, we are asking members to [complete this brief survey](#). RAILS Board members are encouraged to complete the survey as well. The new site will debut in late 2022.

RAILS Offers Programs/Services for Library Staff at All Levels

A common misconception about RAILS is that we primarily offer programs/services of interest to library directors. We are trying to spread the word to support staff from all types of libraries that we have many offerings of interest to them as well. Check out the [For Support Staff](#) page on the RAILS website for targeted information about continuing education, collaboration opportunities, e-resources, and more.

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILS Social Media #CollectionChallenge

RAILS' #CollectionChallenge features a series of social media prompts (two per month) to encourage staff from all types of libraries to share photos/videos of their library collection in different categories (largest item, most circulated item, etc.). [See the complete schedule of challenges.](#)



The first challenge in May asked for a photo/video of an item in the collection that would surprise many people. (See Thornton Fractional High School District 25's Tie-brary post pictured to the left as an example of just one of the fun contributions we received in this category.)

Libraries are asked to share their photos/videos via Twitter and Instagram using #CollectionChallenge when they post. Twitter and Instagram users can view ongoing contributions using this hashtag as well. There will be no winners or prizes – just bragging rights!

RAILS Engages with Library Support Staff at Reaching Forward Conference

Approximately 218 support staffers from RAILS member libraries stopped by the RAILS table at the May 6 [Reaching Forward](#) conference in Rosemont to discuss programs/services RAILS offers of interest to them. Booth workers included Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian; Dan Bostrom, Member Engagement Manager; Brian Smith, Applications & Web Developer; and Nicole Zimmermann, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist.

Those who missed the conference can check out the [For Support Staff](#) page on the RAILS website for targeted information about continuing education, collaboration opportunities, e-resources, and more.

Data in Libraries Networking Group Meeting, June 21

RAILS' new Data in Libraries Networking Group will [host its first meeting](#) via Zoom on Tuesday, June 21, from 2 – 3 p.m. Any RAILS library staff member interested in discussing innovative ways to use or analyze data to improve library service is welcome.

In-Person Visits to RAILS Member Libraries

Associate Executive Director Monica Harris visited Sterling Public Library, Rock Falls Public Library District, and Pearl City Public Library District in April. It was exciting to see the innovative work happening at these libraries, and Monica appreciated the time the directors took at each location to show her around! Monica is also looking forward to visiting LaSalle Public Library and East Moline Public Library in May and additional member libraries in June.

BiblioBoard Creator Discount

RAILS and IHLS public libraries are eligible for [new discounted pricing for Creator](#), which provides a suite of tools to create and publish multimedia content. Libraries can upload digital archives and showcase community content, including digital exhibits of music, art, photography, cookbooks, and more. Over 15 urban and rural libraries [highlight their community collections on Inkie.org Library](#), as well as on their unique library instance (included in the pricing).

EBSCO Deals – Packages for Public and K-12 Libraries, Learning Express, DEI Package

[EBSCO packages for public libraries](#) and [EBSCO packages for K-12 libraries](#) include a variety of core databases and additional choices. Visit the [Deals & Discounts page](#) for pricing, webinar recordings, trial links, and information about other advantageously priced resources, including Learning Express, Library Aware, and a new DEI Package. New sign-ups and renewals for all RAILS packages are due by June 10.

Public Web Browser Available Free for RAILS Libraries

As a benefit of RAILS membership, all RAILS libraries have access to Team Software Solutions' [Public Web Browser](#) (PWB) free of charge for in-library use only. PWB allows libraries to lock down the web browser on computers and customize workstations for specific uses (e.g., a dedicated catalog computer). The RAILS annual subscription has been renewed through June 5, 2023. Log into the [RAILS Deals and Discounts web page](#) for more information.

RDA Toolkit Group Purchase Renewal and Sign-Up

RDA (Resource Description & Access) is an international standard for creating library and cultural heritage metadata. [RDA Toolkit](#)'s subscription-based online platform allows catalogers from libraries of all sizes and types to access RDA data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating metadata. New sign-ups and renewals are due by June 1.

Career Online High School (COHS) Update

Over 30 million American adults do not have a high school diploma. [Career Online High School](#) is an accredited high school completion program that provides graduates with a high school diploma (not a GED) and an entry-level certificate in one of 11 high-demand employment fields. COHS is open to all Illinois public libraries and RAILS subsidizes the cost of the platform.

The following table provides the latest information on the program as of May 10.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
312	148	71	61%/53%

Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources & Programs, attended the first national COHS meet-up on May 11. Smart Horizons, the COHS vendor, hosted the 31 attendees and led a discussion on outreach, marketing collateral, student retention, and support for libraries/students.

Jessica Barnes, RAILS Special Projects Librarian, hosted a COHS Networking Group meeting on May 3. There were seven attendees, and Smart Horizons joined the meeting to discuss COHS updates.

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

RAILS Is a Project Partner for CARLI OER Grant

The Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) received a \$1.08 million grant for [Illinois SCOERs](#) (Support for Creation of Open Educational Resources). Work teams funded through competitive sub-grants will create a minimum of eight open textbooks. RAILS is a grant partner, and Anna Behm, E-Content Specialist, recently helped review nine sub-grant applications.

Latest eRead Illinois News

The [eRead Illinois](#) renewal process began on April 11. As of May 11, 260 libraries have completed the process.

RAILS purchased over 300 Indie Author Project select titles to add to the eRead Illinois collection. These self-published novels have been vetted by *Library Journal* for quality and are available for simultaneous use via the Axis 360 platform.

RAILS staff met with staff from Baker & Taylor (the eRead Illinois vendor) to discuss DEI initiatives for the eRead Illinois collection, updates to Axis 360 and ordering software, reports and statistics, and the addition of the Indie Author Project Select titles.

Inkie.org Library Update

Views of the [Inkie.org Library](#) were very high this month, driven by Bradley Public Library digitizing 70 years of Bradley Bourbonnais Community High School yearbooks. The Facebook post the library created about the yearbooks was shared over 500 times. Views of the yearbooks now account for the most Inkie.org Library views overall this fiscal year.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
April 2022	23,640	16,258	39,898
Fiscal Year to Date	240,877	155,196	396,073

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
April 2022	25,908
Fiscal Year to Date	36,588

Explore More Illinois Update

We continue to add attractions to [Explore More Illinois](#), thanks in part to the [attractions contest](#) mentioned in last month's board report. This month, we reached 43 attractions, the most attractions Explore More Illinois has ever had at one time.



The Explore More Illinois pilot program with Illinois Central College is launched and students and staff have started to make reservations. The Arts @ ICC has joined EMI as an attraction, offering 10% off tickets to their spring play, "Sweat," in May and June.

Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian, hosted the national ePass Users Group meeting in April (ePass is the software used for Explore More Illinois). The eight attendees discussed new reports features and recruiting outdoor attractions, a primary focus for many pass programs.

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

RAILS Staff Workplace Climate Team Projects

On April 27, the RAILS Climate Team had a meeting to talk to other RAILS staff about specific EDI projects they have been working on, including projects originating from team meetings and those identified by RAILS Board EDI subcommittees. Projects discussed included:

- Member Training Cohort
- RAILS Partnership Evaluation
- Connections Program for New Hires
- Staff Relationships/Staff Engagement Initiative
- Internal projects
 - Internal HR Practices
 - Board Recruitment/Nomination Process
 - Presenter/Consultant EDI Directory for Members

The Climate Team hopes to recruit additional staff to help with the projects, and they sent a survey to staff following the April meeting to identify those interested in helping out.

RAILS Staff EDI Training Continues

All RAILS staff will take part in our next internal EDI training session in May. This session will focus on skill building. Staff will have the opportunity to apply their learning from previous sessions to work through specific EDI scenarios together. It will give staff an opportunity to think critically about how they might handle difficult situations and conversations.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value



RAILS Receives 30 My Library Is... Grant Applications from School Libraries

RAILS received 30 applications in our latest round of [My Library Is... Grants for School Libraries](#). The total amount requested was nearly \$120,000! The total amount available to fund these projects is \$50,000, so some difficult decisions will need to be made. RAILS recruited 12 school library staff volunteers to help review the applications using criteria created by RAILS. All applicants will be notified of their status in early June.

Why School Librarians Matter to Students and Communities Blog Post

In [a new video](#) post on the My Library Is... Blog, RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom talks with Andrea Perrin, Janine Asmus, Gail Meyer, and Robyn Whitlock about their Letter to the Editor that was published in the *Chicago Tribune* in April. These four AISLE members discuss why school libraries are so important and what librarians can do to advocate for the profession. (View [the full letter](#) on the ILA website.)

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

Specialized Libraries Program at 2022 ILA Conference

RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom submitted a program proposal for the 2022 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference on “The Crisis in Specialized Libraries: Survival in a Catch-All Field.” The proposal was accepted, and Dan will be one of a panel of speakers to talk about the layoffs, cutbacks, and consolidations in the specialized library field. The ILA conference will take place at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, October 18 – 20. The date/time for this program has not yet been set.

May Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and ISL

RAILS staff meet on the first Tuesday of each month with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), and Illinois State Library (ISL), to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Kara Thorstenson, Director of Libraries and Instructional Technology at Chicago Public Schools, also joined us for the May meeting.

Topics discussed included ongoing efforts to collect better data on Illinois school libraries for advocacy purposes and an update on recent library book challenges.

Evaluate programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact

RAILS Website RFP and Survey

RAILS is in the process of redesigning and rebuilding [our website](#). On May 4, we issued a request for proposals for design and limited development work for the new website. Proposals were due on May 23, and vendor selection is expected to take place in early June. We plan to debut the new site in late 2022.

RAILS is currently looking for feedback from staff at all levels at all types of RAILS libraries to ensure that the new site is as useful as possible. We are conducting a [brief survey](#) to find out how members look for information on the site, additional content and features they would like to see, and more. RAILS Board members are encouraged to complete the survey as well.

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

