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Executive Director Report, June 2022

It has been a short month since the meeting is a week early due to the ALA conference. We have invited newly elected board members to the meeting. And, we will be scheduling the annual board orientation.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

We have already started working on a job description for a Consortial Services Supervisor who will oversee the development of Find More Illinois. The service of the month report for our June meeting is also about FMI so we will be able to provide the board with a progress report as well as a look into the future of this important service.

Anne and I had a lengthy conversation with Kendal Orrison and Alissa Williams, RSA board chair, to discuss accelerating planning for RSA financial sustainability and staff independence. RSA is the only LLSAP that still relies on RAILS for funding of staff (approximately \$900,000 per year). It is very important that all LLSAPs be self-sustaining financially so that member libraries can expect stable and reliable services from these essential organizations.

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

The board election will bring greater diversity to the RAILS board. Of course, our work is far from done, but I am happy to see progress. As we discussed several months ago, we do need to work on changing our election process. The policy committee can begin work on this after the beginning of the new fiscal year when the committee membership is set for the year.

Newly elected board members:

At-large seats:

Rene Leyva, Fossil Ridge Public Library District
Julie Milavec, Downers Grove Public Library

Public Library Trustee seats:

Dianne Hollister, Bloomington Public Library

Vanessa Villarreal, Lake Villa District Library

Specialized Library seat:

Juanita Harrell, DuPage County Law Library

Thanks to all RAILS members who voted in the election. Thanks also to our nominating committee members:

- Committee Chair, Alice Creason, RAILS Board Member, Richton Park Public Library District Trustee
- Susan Busenbark, RAILS Board Member, Kewanee Public Library District Trustee
- Angela Campbell, Rock Island Public Library
- Bobbi Mock, Illinois Veterans Home, Quincy
- Charm Ruhnke, Peru Public Library

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Directors University took place, in person, at the State Library, June 6 through 9. It was a smaller group this year, but the in-person component was very well-received.

You will find the complete list of *My Library Is...* Grantees elsewhere in this report. We received many heartfelt thank you notes from the winning school libraries.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

One of our objectives within this strategic plan goal is to improve our understanding of member library perceptions of inequities in system services among sizes and types of libraries. This will be an important research project that we will undertake this year.

We are also beginning to work on our annual action plan for the strategic plan. This plan will incorporate evaluation of the impact of RAILS services.

RAILS Staff News

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 – June 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:

Libraries Can Offer Patrons of All Ages Online Tutoring through RAILS Discount

Library patrons of all ages can get online tutoring and one-to-one live homework help through [Brainfuse: HelpNow](#), and libraries can get special discounted pricing on this product through RAILS. Over 70 Illinois libraries, including Chicago Public Library, and over 1,000 libraries of all sizes nationwide use Brainfuse. Find out more in the Deals & Discounts section of the RAILS website.

Libraries Can Help Adults Get High School Diplomas through Career Online High School

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 and an entry-level certificate in one of 11 high-demand employment fields. Career Online High School is open to all Illinois public libraries and RAILS subsidizes the cost of the platform.

Learn How You Can Offer Binge Boxes at Your Library

The My Library Is... Advisory Team is planning a series of "Ask Us Anything" Zoom networking sessions on different topics related to library marketing, advocacy, and outreach. The first [session on July 12](#) deals with binge boxes. Register on L2 to find out how your library can get involved with this popular program offering. Anyone working in an Illinois library is welcome!

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILS City Library Directors Networking Group Holds First Meeting

RAILS helped form a networking group for directors from city libraries to discuss common issues and challenges. The group held its first meeting in May and over 30 directors participated. They agreed to share board bylaws and memorandums of agreement and compiled a list of questions for RAILS' attorney. Betsy Adamowski from Wheaton Public Library is leading the group and RAILS will provide support as needed.

Chicago Area Solo Librarians (CASL) Networking Group Meeting, June 24

RAILS is helping to relaunch the [CASL Networking Group](#). The group was created in 2001 and hasn't met for several years. Their primary purpose is to provide networking opportunities for solo librarians at specialized libraries throughout the RAILS region, not just in Chicago. Meetings will take place via Zoom.

RAILS In-Person Member Library Visits

RAILS Associate Executive Director Monica Harris recently visited LaSalle Public Library, Geneseo Public Library District, Cordova District Library, and Morris Area Public Library. She also attended the Moline area librarians networking group, which met at the newly renovated East Moline Public Library. Seeing the innovative and responsive ways all these libraries are meeting the needs of their communities has been inspiring and helpful. Monica is planning visits to several libraries in Central Illinois in July.

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

New RAILS Discount on Brainfuse Online Tutoring and Study Suite

[Brainfuse HelpNow](#) is a unique online tutoring and study suite for patrons of all ages. Tutors provide on-demand, one-to-one online live homework help. Students can get assistance with math, English, writing, science, and social studies. Teens and adults can benefit from tutoring in test prep, career services, digital literacy, and live Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) assistance.

Career Online High School (COHS) Update

In May, Jessica Barnes, Special Projects Librarian, and a representative from Smart Horizons (our [Career Online High School](#) vendor), hosted a webinar about the program. The webinar was recorded, and three people attended live. Jessica has received requests for more information about COHS from two of the attendees.

The following table provides the latest information on the RAILS COHS program as of June 1.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
318	149	74	61%/53%

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

Latest eRead Illinois News

The [eRead Illinois](#) renewal process continues. We sent a final renewal reminder email on June 1. As of noon on that day, 306 libraries completed the renewal process.

RAILS and Baker & Taylor staff met with school librarians on separate occasions to discuss Axis 360 for schools and the scoping function. As a result of these discussions, we are planning a webinar specifically about scoping for school libraries at the start of the new school year.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
May 2022	23,822	15,739	39,561
Fiscal Year to Date	264,699	170,935	435,634

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
May 2022	2,167
Fiscal Year to Date	38,775

Explore More Illinois Update

In May, [Explore More Illinois](#) added its first professional major league sports team with the addition of the Chicago Red Stars. The Red Stars play in the National Women's Soccer League and are offering Explore More users special discounted rates for all ticket levels. The Red Stars are also offering free tickets to Illinois public libraries for summer reading program prizes.



We received more than 150 emails during our Explore More Illinois attraction contest. Final submissions were due May 31. RAILS staff will spend the next two months contacting potential attractions and working with them to add offers to Explore More Illinois.

RAILS staff are planning a day trip to Rockford in June to shoot video at area attractions for the first Explore More Illinois promotional video. We hope to shoot future videos in Peoria, Springfield, and Chicago.

As of June 1, 408 Illinois libraries participate in Explore More, including 324 RAILS libraries and 84 IHLS libraries, and there are 43 attractions.

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

RAILS Participates in Charmm'd Foundation DEI Peer Advisory Group

RAILS Associate Executive Director Monica Harris participates in Charmm'd Foundation's DEI Peer Advisory Group, a professional affinity group directed at nonprofit organizations who have made their commitment to

DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) a foundational part of their organizational structure. The group helps educational, government, and nonprofit institutions share resources and best practices. This bi-monthly group gives RAILS a great opportunity to see how organizations outside of the library world are approaching EDI best practices.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value



RAILS Awards My Library Is... Grants to 20 School Libraries

Congratulations to the 20 RAILS school libraries that received a total of \$78,232.80 in [My Library Is... grants](#). These grants help recipients focus on projects that tell the library story and increase visibility and support for school libraries.

- Alan B. Shepard Middle School Learning Commons / Deerfield School District 109
- Beach Park Community Consolidated School District 3
- Burbank Elementary School / City of Chicago School District #299
- Coal City Middle School
- East Elementary School / Zion School District 6
- Glenside Middle School / Queen Bee Public Schools #16
- Grace Lutheran School, River Forest
- Hampshire High School
- Heyworth CUSD #4
- Highland Middle School, Libertyville
- John T. Pirie Fine Arts and Academic Center/ City of Chicago School District #299
- Medinah Elementary School District #11, Roselle
- Peoria PSD #150
- Riverside Brookfield Township District #208
- Roberto Clemente Community Academy / City of Chicago School District #299
- Rochelle Township High School District # 212
- Rondout School District 72, Lake Forest
- Summit Hill Junior High, Frankfort
- Wallin Oaks Elementary School / Plainfield CCSD 202
- Zion-Benton Township High School District 126

My Library Is... Networking Event on Binge Boxes

Many libraries are offering “binge boxes,” which are usually collections of books or DVDs and other goodies ([see example](#)) that library patrons can check out. The My Library Is... Advisory Team is offering an [Ask Us Anything: Binge Boxes](#) event on July 12 to help libraries learn more and share ideas. There will be three short presentations and plenty of time for Q&A.

This event is open to anyone working in an Illinois library. The presentation portion will be recorded and posted to the RAILS YouTube page. The advisory team is planning a series of “Ask Us Anything” Zoom events on different topics related to library marketing/advocacy/outreach. Stay tuned!

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

First RAILS Moodle Course, “MARC 21 Standard,” a Success

RAILS recently implemented the Moodle Learning Management System, an e-learning platform that tracks learner progress, issues a certificate of completion, and enables learning transcripts. Nancy George, RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator, taught our first Moodle course, “MARC 21 Standard: An Introduction.” It ran from April 25 through May 22, and members accessed the Moodle site using their L2 credentials. There were 53 attendees from libraries of all types (8 academic, 36 public, 6 school, and 3 specialized).

RAILS received very positive feedback, and 99% of participants said the course “exceeded their expectations.” One participant emailed Nancy directly: “This class was very well-organized and had incredibly useful content. It was great to learn from an instructor as knowledgeable as you. You provided a wealth of information to draw on over time and scaled the class material to a manageable amount of reading, listening, discussing, and homework. Thank you so much for creating this fantastic class!”

Directors University 2.0

Registration for [Directors University 2.0](#), a new expansion of Directors University (DU), opened May 25. DU 2.0 invites past participants of DU and the Statewide Public Library Management Institute to explore additional topics related to public libraries and the director’s role, including EDI, capital improvement plans, leadership development, and employee coaching. Seventy-three library directors across Illinois applied in the first week of registration; 50 will be selected to attend. DU 2.0 will be held at the Illinois State Library August 2-4. Directors University 2.0 is a joint project of RAILS, IHLS, ILA, and the Illinois State Library.

RAILS Awards Two CE Event Grants

RAILS awarded two CE event grants totaling \$3,500 in May to support member-driven learning opportunities. The ATLAS (Area Training for Librarians and Staff) networking group received funding for their annual multi-library training day, which will feature presentations on customer service and EDI. Dunlap Public Library District received a grant to support their mindfulness/stress-reduction workshop for library staff. Both events are open to all RAILS members.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

Collaboration with Chicago Public Library System Continues

Deirdre Brennan and Monica Harris continue to meet monthly with Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Chris Brown. In response to a request from CPL staff, RAILS opened most of our email lists to CPL staff. (IHLS members are also welcome to use these lists.)

Anyone who logs into the RAILS website with their L2 information can now use the lists, regardless of their library system affiliation. This should also encourage CPL staff interested in participating in these email discussions to maintain an up-to-date L2 account.

RAILS Offers Chromebook Lending Opportunity for Western Illinois Public Libraries

RAILS is partnering with Western Illinois University (WIU), IHLS, and several other regional partners on a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband. Part of this grant allows RAILS to work directly with three public libraries to host Chromebook lending programs. All technical support and maintenance is paid for and provided by WIU. Public libraries in these counties are eligible: Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren.

2022 Special Libraries Association (SLA) Midwest Symposium

The annual SLA Midwest Symposium was held online on June 10, and was co-hosted by the Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and St. Louis communities of the Special Libraries Association. This year's theme was "Transformation of Librarianship." Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager and current SLA Illinois President, helped plan the event, which included three educational sessions, lightning talks, and opportunities for networking.

RAILS On-Demand Presentation at Lake County ROE Event

Dan Bostrom was invited to offer an on-demand presentation at the 2022 Lake County Regional Office of Education (ROE) Summer Professional Learning event for K-12 teachers, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, administrators, support staff and other educators. The presentation, "How RAILS Can Help Your School Library Thrive" will be available to participants all summer.

RAILS Takes Part in LIBRAS Annual Meeting

[LIBRAS, Inc.](#), a consortium of 20 private college and university libraries in the Chicago metropolitan area, held their annual meeting in May. Dan Bostrom gave a brief update on RAILS news and services. Over 30 people participated.

June Meeting with AISLE, CPS, 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), Chicago Public Schools, IHLS, ILA, and the Illinois State Library to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. The June meeting featured a continuing discussion on the RAILS school library data project, materials challenges, and possible grant writing training for school libraries from the Library Book Selection Service (LBSS) Endowment Fund.

Collaborate with partners to develop a plan for achieving universal service

Universal Service and Multiple Listing Categories

RAILS Universal Service Committee member Gail Bush has been working to have the Multiple Listing Service include a public library service category as part of real estate listings in the Midwest Real Estate Data service area. To move this process forward, RAILS provided a letter of support, and the Illinois Library Association, Illinois State Library, and Illinois Heartland Library System have all agreed to provide letters of support as well. RAILS greatly appreciates the collaborative support of our partner library organizations. The Universal Services committee will discuss this further at their June meeting.

RAILS Board Calendar of Events

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<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

