Introduction

This narrative details RAILS activities and accomplishments in pursuit of the goals listed in the system's FY 2022 Operational Plan. All activities listed meet the requirements in the administrative rules for library systems.

Our overarching goal throughout the year was to provide the highest quality service to RAILS member libraries of all sizes and types (academic, public, school, and specialized) and to help them provide the highest quality service possible to their customers. As the pandemic continued, most services (other than delivery) continued to be virtual, though RAILS staff did start making more in-person library visits and started attending conferences in person as the library world began to open up and return to somewhat normal.

A major highlight of FY 2022 was the development and board approval of a new RAILS strategic plan, vision statement, and mission statement about halfway through the year. These documents were based in very large part on feedback from RAILS libraries of all types and sizes and gave RAILS a clear direction for moving forward into 2025. Though this narrative includes accomplishments related to the goals and objectives in our new strategic plan, it follows the format of the plan that was in effect when RAILS submitted our FY 2022 Area and Per Capita Grant application.

Strategic Plan Goal One: *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*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Promote, support, and expand resource sharing among RAILS libraries and beyond	Promoted/strongly encouraged resource sharing of library materials, and member knowledge/best practices via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. See information on specific efforts to promote, support, and expand resource sharing throughout this document. Collaborated with the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Library System (CPLS), Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), Illinois State Library (ISL), Special Libraries Association Illinois Chapter (SLA IL), and other stakeholders to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. See details on specific collaborative efforts throughout this document. RAILS' Executive Director and Associate Executive Director met monthly with the Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner to discuss possible areas of collaboration

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	In response to a request from CPL, opened most RAILS email lists for use by CPL library staff. (IHLS member library staff are also welcome to use most RAILS lists.) Supported the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) and participated in ICOLC activities relevant to RAILS strategic priorities. RAILS' Executive Director and Director of Technology Services served on ICOLC's OCLC Task Force calling for more transparent and equitable pricing of OCLC products. RAILS Executive Director elected/served as American Regional Council Delegate to OCLC's Global Council RAILS Executive Director appointed to the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) to help make decisions about statewide library services. (The first ISLAC meeting occurred in FY 2023.) Worked with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve, increase, and promote resource sharing between all types of Illinois libraries. The committee provided perspective on resource sharing initiatives relevant to the new RAILS strategic plan, RAILS electronic resources, and administrative rules updates. Provided ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. RAILS' Executive Director served on the Advisory Board of the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub. Received ILA's 2021 Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award after being nominated by a RAILS member library. The award recognizes "sustained activity and contributions having a lasting impact on librarianship, in regard to resource sharing and/or interlibrary cooperation." Participated or agreed to participate as a project partner in several grant projects that will continue in FY 2023, including: **CARLI SCOERs Grant** Project partner for CARLI's SCOERs (Support for Creation of Open Educational Resources) grant to create open textbooks • Promoted SCOERs grant opportunities to RAILS members via regular articles in the *RAILS E-News* and a podcast with the Senior Director of CARLI and grant project manager • Reviewed sub-grant applications

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Western Illinois University (WIU) Grant (Broadband READY Grant) Partnered with WIU, IHLS, and other regional partners on a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband, which includes the opportunity for RAILS to work directly with three public libraries to host Chromebook lending programs **Northern Illinois University (NIU) Grant (Broadband READY Grant)** Project partner for NIU's "Advancing Adaptive Lifelong Digital Literacy to Promote Digital Equity in Northern Illinois" grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Broadband. Activities include helping to identify and work with libraries to participate in the project by providing information about their communities' digital equity needs and/or hosting Digital Navigators in their libraries and helping to develop a replicable training approach that libraries can take in their own communities.
Lead and work with RAILS-area consortia and standalone libraries to expand resource sharing	**Promote/Support LLSAP Membership** Provided a mix of financial support and in-kind services to six RAILS LLSAPs: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA NFP, and SWAN. Detailed cost information for in-kind services was provided with FY 2023 grant awards, with a plan to resume deducting these costs from grant awards beginning in FY 2024. Offered catalog membership grants to encourage libraries to join a RAILS LLSAP. The application deadlines for FY 2022 were October 15, 2021 and April 15, 2022. Awarded $32,508 to four libraries, including one school and three public libraries. Worked with the RAILS Consortia Committee to expand resource sharing and promote consortial membership. The committee established an LLSAP Sustainability Working Group. Working Group activities included: • Strengthening criteria for libraries seeking to join an existing LLSAP to ensure that libraries are well-equipped to assess affordability, and that new libraries will not be a financial drain on the LLSAP or its members • Investigating a statewide ILS platform, including seeking proposals from consultants to assess how multitype resource sharing in Illinois could be done more efficiently. RAILS received three proposals and discussed them with ISL and IHLS. Ultimately, it was decided not to move forward with this project, and to

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	focus on working with RSA on greater financial independence and sustainability.
	• Working on expanding access to MARC records through Find More Illinois (FMI)
	• Talking with Auto-Graphics, the FMI vendor, about an interoperable circulation system for unautomated libraries
	Discussed accelerating planning for RSA financial sustainability and staff independence with RSA NFP representatives. (RSA is the only LLSAP that still relies on RAILS for funding of staff.)
	Helped members meet the new requirement in the Illinois administrative rules to evaluate whether they will make their holdings available via a shared collection as detailed in section 1.2 of this report
	Promoted the value of consortia membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools and member encounters, including promoting the value of participating in Find More Illinois
	Expanded and Promoted Find More Illinois (FMI)
	Negotiated incentive program with Auto-Graphics, the FMI vendor, where new libraries could join without paying the usual setup fee or any annual fees until July 2023. Promoted the program widely.
	Recruited 18 libraries to join FMI in FY 2022, including 17 publics and one school. Met and corresponded with many more interested libraries. Targeted standalone libraries and encouraged them to join. Provided training, consulting, and technical support.
	Heavily publicized FMI benefits to all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) via RAILS communication tools and individualized member encounters. Featured regular articles promoting FMI in the *RAILS E-News*. Developed video with testimonials from current FMI library users to help recruit new libraries to join.
	Continued working with the LINKin libraries not currently participating in FMI to encourage them to join. We now have four of 10 LINKin libraries participating, with two others actively considering joining.
	Worked with all six libraries in the Pinnacle Library Consortium to help them join FMI
	Continued to offer IHLS libraries the opportunity to participate in FMI

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Support High-Quality Cataloging Established statewide World Language Cataloging Services Program to cover all languages considered part of a library's regular collection. Applied for and received ISL grant for program. Conducted pilot program with all types of libraries to test program parameters. Launched full program and publicized statewide. Presented on this service and other cataloging topics and services at meetings of various LLSAP and networking groups throughout FY 2022. Offered cataloging training, including: • "Copy Cataloging of Print Monographs Using RDA," three-day virtual class presented by RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator • "Getting Ready to Use the New RDA" webinar • "MARC 21 Standard: An Introduction" Moodle training course led by RAILS Cataloging Services Coordinator (see more information on Moodle in continuing education section below) • Presented program on "Cataloging Essentials" at PrairieCat Users Group Day Regularly promoted training offered by the IHLS Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) Helped establish and promote the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Metadata Networking Group Actively contributed to the Open Cataloging Rules project, an international initiative to create a freely available collaborative cataloging code
Work with the Illinois State Library, Illinois Heartland Library System, and other stakeholders to improve physical delivery services through streamlining and standardizing operations and evaluating alternative methods and best practices	Worked with RAILS members of all types (academic, public, school, and special) throughout FY 2022 to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs Consulted with members on delivery issues/concerns. Widely promoted use of delivery help desk ticketing system via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. Evaluated responses to May 2021 RFP for delivery and sorting services. Conducted further discussions with vendor who best met RAILS needs. Continued providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI libraries via ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service)

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Discontinued contract with Comet Messenger service to provide delivery to RAILS special libraries in the Chicago area as RAILS determined we could conduct this service more efficiently and economically "in house." Communicated changes in procedures to all potentially affected libraries. Promoted the need to complete quarterly delivery volume counts to RAILS members. Consulted with libraries on an individual basis as needed to help them perform the counts. Contracted with GeoMARC to examine current delivery routes and identify re-routing efficiencies. Began with routes originating from the East Peoria delivery hub.
Develop and implement innovative projects to expand access to a wider variety of resources for Illinois residents, including providing access to digital content/e-resources and expertise	**eRead Illinois Axis 360** Consulted with existing and potential eRead Illinois libraries on a regular basis Analyzed eRead Illinois fee structure to help inform future development opportunities Recruited RAILS libraries and IHLS non-SHARE libraries to join eRead Illinois Axis 360. By the end of FY 2022, over 950 libraries participated. Supported the training and marketing needs of participants. Offered eRead Illinois training, including: • Webinar for school library participants to help them get the most out of the Axis 360 platform • Training on Axis 360 admin portal • eRead Illinois demo at 2021 in-person AISLE conference Worked with Baker & Taylor (our eRead Illinois vendor) to perform a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion analysis of the eRead Illinois collection. Approximately 20% of the collection was considered diverse. Regularly welcomed acquisition requests for the eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection Completed final evaluation of activities associated with FY 2021 ISL e-book grant and submitted required paperwork to ISL **BiblioBoard/inkie.org**

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Analyzed BiblioBoard usage data to determine cost-effectiveness of program. Refocused platform to feature content by Illinois authors, creators, and communities and rebranded it as the Inkie.org Library. Transferred many BiblioBoard collections to eRead Illinois Axis 360.
	Offered to present programs to interested member library patrons on Inkie.org as an e-book creation source. Conducted programs at three libraries with a total attendance of 35 library patrons. Made presentation slides available for interested libraries to download.
	Presented program on Inkie.org at Reaching Forward South conference
	Publicized BiblioBoard/Inkie.org resources as being free to all Illinois libraries courtesy of RAILS
	Continued offering group purchase pricing on BiblioBoard products for self-published authors
	Explore More Illinois
	Publicized program to all Illinois public libraries and encouraged them to participate. By the end of FY 2022, 324 RAILS libraries and 84 IHLS libraries participated.
	Grew/expanded the number and types of participating attractions, including attractions of wide interest to ethnically and culturally diverse audiences. Welcomed first out-of-state attractions. By the end of FY 2022, Explore More included 53 attractions.
	Continued to work with IHLS to recruit IHLS libraries and set them up in the program. Talked with IHLS members about the program at RAILS booth at IHLS Member Day 2021.
	Launched community college pilot program • Met with Quipu Group, our Explore More Illinois service provider, to discuss the prospect of community colleges joining the program. Worked with Quipu on detailed technical requirements. • Met with CARLI staff to discuss the implications of expanding the program to community colleges • Met with College of DuPage to discuss ways the program could be used with students • Worked with Illinois Central College on beta test of program
	Publicized the program via multiple RAILS communication channels and special presentations:

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• Presented program at Reaching Forward South conference • Gave presentation at RSA Users Group meeting • Recorded webinar for Dunlap Public Library and posted it to the Explore More Illinois website for all members to view • Spoke to 11 attendees at a meeting of the Illinois Association of Museums about becoming an Explore More Illinois attraction • Featured regular articles about the program in the *RAILS E-News* Hosted national ePass Users Group sessions for staff who run pass programs across the country. (ePass is the software used to operate Explore More Illinois.) Conducted Explore More Illinois survey to get input on the user experience to share with attractions. The 86 responses received since the February 2022 survey launch indicate that over 90% are satisfied or highly satisfied with the user experience. Held contest to gather suggestions for new attractions to add to Explore More Illinois. Received 155 submissions and have so far recruited seven new attractions as a direct result of these suggestions. **Expand Member Access to Additional E-Resources** Led efforts to develop a proposal for statewide, state-funded access to online resources for all who live in Illinois • Publicized the proposal and provided talking points members could use when discussing the proposal with elected officials • Discussed the proposal with Illinois Senator Laura Murphy and other legislators • Discussed the proposal at a RAILS member update session • Included information about the proposal and talking points in the *RAILS E-News* Introduced Web Accessibility Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) web page to help public libraries understand web accessibility and how to vet resources Introduced Vendor Privacy Policies web page with links to privacy policies for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries Continued to support Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author project by regularly promoting project activities via the *RAILS E-News*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Use economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their customers than they would be able to afford on their own	Explored new and advantageous deals for member libraries. New offers added or pricing restructures in FY 2022 included: • Auto-Graphics' VERSO Express ILS for smaller libraries • BiblioBoard Creator digital content creation tools • BookBrowse for Libraries readers' advisory resource • Brainfuse HelpNow, JobNow, VetNow online tutoring and study suite • BTCat cataloging utility for public and specialized libraries • Checkers Library TV's "Reading Road Trip" • EBSCO DEI Package • Gale Business Plan Builder online planning tool • Gale Presents: Udemy video-based courses • Legal GPS online, interactive business resource • LOTE Online for Kids picture books in world languages Continued to work on implementing Consortia Manager to provide an infrastructure for managing RAILS group purchases and discounts Developed a vendor survey to expedite communications on technical requirements for vendors offering potential discounted pricing to RAILS members Presented program about RAILS discounts at North Suburban Conference of High School Librarians. The group of 36 expressed interest in a follow-up meeting dedicated to this topic. Co-presented a program on consortial purchasing at the ICOLC annual conference Met bi-monthly with Consortia Purchasing Managers from Califa (California), Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative, Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS), and OhioNet to discuss issues related to purchasing across large, multitype consortia **Career Online High School Program (COHS)** Promoted availability of scholarships through COHS program via RAILS communication tools and member encounters. A total of 27 people in Illinois received a high school diploma through the program in FY 2022. Held webinars for libraries to learn more about the COHS program. Made recordings available to those who could not attend "live."

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Co-presented programs on COHS at ILA annual conference and Public Library Association conference

Regularly met with networking group of COHS library staff participants to develop and promote the program |
| Offer members a variety of opportunities to build collaborative relationships to share best practices, expertise, and to develop innovative solutions to common issues and challenges | Encouraged use of RAILS mailing lists by staff at all levels at all types of libraries

Established new mailing lists for:
• Children's Librarians' Association of the South Suburbs (CLASS)
• ILA's Small & Rural Libraries Forum

Continued to build and strengthen relationships and engagement with RAILS networking groups. Publicized existing RAILS networking groups and the benefits of belonging to a networking group in general.
• Provided three networking groups with Zoom licenses in FY 2022.

Assisted in the formation of new networking groups, including:
• Chicago Area Solo Librarians networking group (relaunch)
• City Library Directors Networking Group
• Data in Libraries Networking Group
• Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Metadata Networking Group (as referenced above)

Scheduled four RAILS Online Roundtables on a variety of topics of interest to RAILS member libraries of all types as noted elsewhere in this document |
| Foster networking and collaboration between staff from all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) to create a community of connected peers and to build on the strengths of multitype cooperation | Continued providing leadership and support to SLA IL and specialized libraries via the RAILS Member Engagement Manager serving as President of that group

Initiated monthly meetings with AISLE and others as detailed later in this document

Publicized networking events/opportunities from other library-related organizations

(See other efforts to collaborate with all types of libraries throughout this document) |

Strategic Plan Goal Two: *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Help member libraries ensure that current/ potential customers are aware of all of the programs/services/resources the library has to offer	**Expanded My Library Is… (MLI) Campaign** Conducted individualized surveys of the four types of RAILS libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) to determine needs not currently being met by the campaign. Shared survey with IHLS to promote to their members. Received 404 responses, mainly from public libraries (245), with higher response from school libraries than we usually get from surveys (118). Analyzed and began implementing survey findings. Continued to work with IHLS to further expand the campaign statewide Continued working with MLI Advisory Group (consisting of staff from all types of libraries) to publicize the campaign and to develop new activities to help libraries prove their value and tell their stories Expanded MLI grant program for school libraries. Hosted two "office hours" sessions to answer questions about the grants and provide attendees with an opportunity to share/vet ideas. Awarded $78,232.80 in grants to 20 RAILS school libraries. Introduced "Specialized Library Spotlight" video interviews and invited specialized libraries statewide to participate to highlight the valuable work they do. Filmed and publicized 12 spotlights. Enhanced and expanded MLI blog. Recruited regular posts from RAILS members and MLI Advisory Group members to help libraries share best practices. Offered continuing education (CE) opportunities based on member feedback on MLI surveys referenced above, including: • "Telling Your Library Story," three-day virtual course • "Working with the Media Made Easy" • "Powerful Presentations: Data Visualization Techniques for Delivering Effective Slideshows" • "Ultimate Instagram Workshop" Offered MLI online roundtables to help members promote programs/ services more effectively, including: • "Canva for Libraries" • "Adobe Suite for Libraries"

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Conducted/publicized *Sparks* podcast interview on using data to show the value of the library. (Respondents to MLI surveys referenced above requested information and assistance on using data for advocacy purposes.)

Shared information at ILA Marketing Forum Roundtable on how the MLI campaign has successfully helped Illinois libraries share their stories. Promoted options for marketing staff to share resources and best practices via the campaign website.

Other Activities

Responded to a request from two RAILS public library directors to help get more public libraries listed on the 2022 Pace Suburban Bus Map. Using L2, developed a list of libraries near a bus line by county and asked those libraries to enter their information on an online form. The PACE planning department is reviewing the list.

Experimented with using Meltwater media monitoring software to track and report on coverage of RAILS and our member libraries by different media sources |
| Help member libraries prove their value to administrative bodies, funders, elected officials, etc. | Offered CE webinars based on member feedback, including:
- "Do's and Don'ts of Library Fundraising"
- "Articulating Your Value: Making the Case for Information Services"

Publicized ILA Library Legislative meetups and encouraged member library staff and trustees to attend. RAILS staff and board members also attended the meetups as possible.

(The activities in the previous and following section also helped us to meet this objective.) |
| Advocate for and help members advocate for all libraries as they face funding and other challenges | Continued with efforts to gather and analyze data on Illinois school libraries to get a better picture of school library needs in Illinois
- Hired Data Research Specialist to lead the project
- Worked with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to include extra questions for school libraries in the FY 2022 annual certification process to get a more accurate picture of school funding and staff; 2023 annual certification will include a revised set of questions for schools to gather better data

Initiated and scheduled monthly meetings with representatives from AISLE, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), IHLS, ILA, and ISL to discuss how |

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	we could work collaboratively to support school libraries. Presented regular reports on RAILS' ongoing efforts to collect better data on Illinois school libraries for advocacy purposes.

Worked with the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee to identify issues and challenges affecting all types of libraries and initiate local, regional, and/or statewide advocacy efforts to help resolve these issues/challenges. Topics regularly discussed included challenges faced by school and specialized libraries, library materials challenges, and the ongoing RAILS school library data project.

Encouraged all Illinois libraries to take the #FundLibraries Challenge by building something inspiring using books, posting their creation on social media using the hashtag #FundLibraries, and tagging three other libraries and encouraging them to post something as well

Encouraged members to support the proposed increase in funding for the System Area and Per Capita program in the Secretary of State's FY 2023 budget

Continued to work with the ILA Public Policy Committee to discuss upcoming legislation of importance to libraries. Kept RAILS libraries informed of important legislative issues.

Encouraged members to support American Library Association advocacy initiatives via the *RAILS E-News*, including:
- Build America's Libraries Act to fund library construction and renovation
- #FundLibraries to support federal funding increases for libraries |

Strategic Plan Goal Three: *Help libraries be the best they can be*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Continue to provide continuing education (CE) to ensure ongoing staff development for all levels of staff at all types of libraries	Offered consulting/CE on resource sharing, library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules as referenced in other sections of this document. Offered training and consulting in other mandated areas as needed.

Continued to gather member input on CE needs and implement training to meet those needs. Began using two new post-event surveys to identify the potential impacts of training content. |

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Implemented Moodle Learning Management System, an e-learning platform that tracks learner progress. (A RAILS staffer taught our first Moodle course on the MARC 21 Standard as referenced above.) The RAILS EDI Learning Cohort (see below) will utilize this platform during FY 2023. Partnered with AISLE, IHLS, and other stakeholders to identify training needs for school library staff. Offered joint CE opportunities based on that feedback, including: • "System E-Content and E-Resources for Illinois Educators" webinar to promote system e-book/e-audiobook programs, vendor discounts, networking events, and more • "Stop, Look, Listen: Helping Students Spot the Fakes" news literacy program Awarded two CE event grants totaling $3,500 to support member-driven learning opportunities. Both events were open to all RAILS members. Continued partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership Continued partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline
Ensure that all libraries are able to offer the best possible service to their community of users	**L2 – Library Directory & Learning Calendar** Continued to provide statewide leadership for L2. Hosted and maintained L2, made updates, provided user help and support. Applied for and received a grant from ISL to help support our L2 efforts. Established the L2 Governing Group (L2G2), a statewide group of representatives from stakeholder organizations that will provide guidance on the project roadmap and the development of major new features. Continued development work on the "new L2" to implement additional features and enhancements requested by users (including users from RAILS, IHLS, ISL, LLSAPs, and others) and to improve the user experience. Updates included: • Adding individual libraries' certification history • Learning log feature for non-L2 events • Ability to view recorded attendance for L2 events

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• Access to staff event registrations for users with agency level affiliation • Additional administrative reports • Additions and refinements to the L2 API Continued to contract with Aten Design Group for L2 support and feature development **Certification** Worked with RAILS members to ensure that they completed the certification process • Evaluated data gained from 2021 certification process and made necessary changes • Added additional questions for school libraries as specified above • Planned to add additional questions for academic and special libraries in FY 2023
Ensure the ongoing education of library leaders and the development of leadership skills for library staff	Worked with statewide partners to plan/implement Directors University at the Illinois State Library in Springfield Worked with statewide partners to begin planning new Directors 2.0 event for alumni from past Directors University or SPLMI (Statewide Public Library Management Institute) sessions. Over 100 library directors across Illinois applied in the first two weeks of registration. (Actual event took place in FY 2023.) Provided training and networking opportunities to help public library trustees fulfill their roles and develop leadership skills, including: • Continued partnership with United for Libraries to provide statewide, online, on-demand trustee training. Publicized training widely. • RAILS staff and board member presented program at ILA virtual conference on how trustees can best lead their libraries without overstepping their authority • Offered "Succession Planning for Trustees" Zoom online roundtable for RAILS public library trustees • RAILS staff and board member participated in ILA Trustee Forum panel discussion on evaluating the library director • RAILS staff member spoke about library board roles and responsibilities at North Chicago Public Library Board of Trustees retreat

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• Consulted with/attended library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements

Strategic Plan Goal Four: *Prepare libraries for the future*

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
Help libraries anticipate, understand, and respond to changing social issues and customer needs	**General** Identified/monitored issues, trends, and challenges affecting RAILS members and provided CE/consulting to help members respond as noted in other sections of this document Continued to develop/expand the Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website to help members respond to current issues and trends. (See other sections of this document for information on specific pulse pages.) Produced regular RAILS *Sparks* podcasts featuring interviews on current issues/trends affecting libraries as indicated in other sections of this document **COVID-19 Related Issues** Continued providing information and leadership to RAILS members via the COVID-19 Pulse Page on the RAILS website, regular articles in the *RAILS E-News*, RAILS Member Update sessions, and the RAILS Executive Director's continued service on the REALM Steering Committee Created a Vaccine Education Toolkit on the COVID-19 Pulse page with resources to help libraries educate their communities about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines Created a "reopening survey" and continuously updated the results in response to many member requests for information about what services other libraries were offering as pandemic restrictions eased Offered CE webinars on pandemic related issues, including: • "Latest Guidance on Vaccination and Masking" • "Being an Effective Remote Worker" • "Designing the Post-Pandemic Library" (three-part series)

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• "The Connected Library: Vetting and Partnering with Social Service Providers" • RAILS staff member participated in panel discussion at ILA virtual conference on the ways the pandemic impacted e-content in libraries Promoted American Rescue Plan Act grant offerings to members to help them recover from and respond to the pandemic **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiatives** Worked with the RAILS Board EDI Committee and subcommittees to promote and foster EDI. Restructured board EDI committees to shift focus to be more strategic and advisory to match other board committees. Launched cohort learning model to engage members in a collective discourse on critical EDI issues. Invited 50 participants at all staff levels and from all types of member libraries to apply. (The cohort will begin in FY 2023.) Added EDI consultants to the RAILS Consulting Directory in response to member requests Created framework for directory to include presenters and entertainers with both an EDI and non-EDI focus, as well as EDI staff trainers Began research on job ads and job descriptions, with a final product to be a web page on the RAILS website with links to resources, templates, checklists, and a general rubric for job descriptions and interview questions Continued the work of the RAILS Climate Team to identify and implement internal best practices and initiatives for RAILS staff • Offered mandatory staff EDI training. Conducted survey to gather staff feedback on training and made changes to future training offerings as a result. • Worked on a rubric RAILS staff can use as a guide when selecting partners/vendors and evaluating grant applications. Created a Partnership Evaluation Team which will use the rubric to evaluate partners on an ongoing basis. • Began work on staff engagement/inclusion activities and a refined employee onboarding experience Offered EDI-related CE webinars to RAILS members, including:

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	• "Becoming An Upstander" • "Accessibility and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Marketing" Awarded seven EDI Training Grants in July 2021, totaling $11,800. Promoted these offerings to RAILS members via the *RAILS E-News* and other communication vehicles. (See info on second round of FY 2022 CE Training Grants above.) Met with ILA Executive Director to ensure that our EDI efforts were in sync and not duplicative (See other sections of this document for additional RAILS FY 2022 EDI activities)
Partner with libraries and other stakeholders to foster an educated, engaged, and civil society	**Materials Challenges** Helped libraries address issues related to materials challenges, including: • Launched new Materials Challenges Pulse Page on RAILS website • Offered "Preparing for and Handling Book Challenges" webinar • Offered RAILS online roundtable on the "Ins and Outs of Materials Challenges" • Publicized and indicated strong support for AISLE's efforts to oppose attempts to censor or remove books from school libraries • Featured discussion of materials challenges at a RAILS member update session (Activities related to helping members with advocacy efforts and the EDI activities referenced throughout this document also helped RAILS meet this objective.)
Expand access to library resources and services by addressing issues related to unserved and underserved Illinois residents and continuing to work toward a statewide library card	Continued to work with the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee to find and implement solutions to challenges related to the unserved in Illinois Via the Universal Services Committee, asked the RAILS Board to send a statement to ISL about the need for a statewide strategy to make more progress on achieving universal service in Illinois Worked with Universal Service Committee to have Multiple Listing Service include a public library service category as part of real estate listings in the Midwest Real Estate Data service area. Provided a letter of support and asked IHLS, ILA, and ISL to provide letters as well.

Objectives	Activities/Accomplishments
	Worked with Universal Service Committee and Illinois Senator Laura Murphy toward the successful passage of legislation extending the Cards for Kids Act by allowing a public library board to waive the nonresident fee for all persons under the age of 18 (Public Act 102-0843) • Worked with RAILS' attorney to develop FAQ to address member library questions about Public Act 102- 0843 Provided input for and promoted ISL's revised public library nonresident FAQ Worked on obtaining funding for statewide access to online resources as referenced in e-resources section above Promote BiblioBoard platform (including Inkie.org) as a way to deliver e-content to anyone in Illinois, including the unserved Provided information on intergovernmental agreements (IGA) via the RAILS website, including an IGA template for members to utilize Publicized requirement for library boards to vote annually on participation in the nonresident program and for members to update their participation information via L2

Strategic Plan Goal Five: *Aim to be the best library system in the country*

Objectives	Planned Activities
Fully communicate and engage with members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	**Member Recruitment** Engaged with libraries interested in RAILS membership. Worked with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL. (See section 3.1 of this annual report for a list of new members added in FY 2022.) **General Member Communication/Engagement** Promoted available programs/services via RAILS communication tools and member encounters Began work on redesigning/rebuilding the RAILS website, with the new site to debut in late calendar year 2022 • Set up the development webserver

Objectives	Planned Activities
	• Began Drupal website configuration and content migration in the development environment • Issued request for proposals for design and limited development work for new RAILS website. Contracted with Aten Design Group in June 2022. • Conducted survey to gather member feedback on current use of the RAILS website Conducted survey to determine how we could make the *RAILS E-News* a more effective communication tool as referenced below Expanded use of video to promote RAILS programs/services to different audiences Visited as many member libraries throughout the RAILS area as possible either in person or virtually. (See more information in section 3.4 of this annual report.) Scheduled RAILS member updates to share the latest RAILS and other library-related news with members Sent all new RAILS library directors a welcome communication to acquaint them with system programs/services Offered all new library directors "New Director Welcome" online discussions to help them learn more about RAILS programs/services, Held 13 discussions in FY 2022. Exhibited at library conferences (virtually and in person), including conferences for different types of libraries and different levels of library staff, including: • AISLE in-person conference – 129 booth visitors • IDEAcon (Illinois Digital Educators Alliance conference), in-person – 120 booth visitors • ILA virtual conference – 40 virtual booth visitors • Reaching Forward (in person) – 218 booth visitors • Reaching Forward South (in person) – 18 booth visitors Presented programs at library-related conferences as appropriate to promote RAILS programs/services and the benefits of those programs/services for different types of RAILS libraries and different levels of RAILS staff. (See other sections of this document for information on specific programs.)

Objectives	Planned Activities
	Sponsored library-related conferences, including:
	• AISLE annual conference
	• ILA annual conference
	• Reaching Forward South
	• Reaching Forward
	Multitype Communication/Engagement
	Invited academic, school, and specialized libraries to schedule a 30-minute Zoom session to learn about RAILS programs/services of specific interest to their library type. Held four sessions.
	Regularly communicated important information for academic, school, and specialized libraries via the *RAILS E-News* and type of library mailing lists, including information about RAILS programs/services, ISL information for specific library types, and information from other associations/organizations (CE, upcoming conferences, etc.)
	Provided information on RAILS offerings for academic libraries at several events sponsored by the LIBRAS Consortium of 20 private college and university libraries located in the Chicago metropolitan area, including:
	• Fall 2021 LIBRAS Directors' meeting
	• Spring 2022 LIBRAS Directors' meeting
	• LIBRAS annual meeting
	Offered one-to-one Zoom meetings for school library staff new to RAILS or needing a refresher on services available to school libraries. Conducted 13 sessions.
	Gave a variety of in-person and virtual presentations on RAILS programs/services for school library staff, including:
	• Presentation at Chicago Public Schools District Librarians meeting
	• Presentation at AISLE Librarians in the South Suburbs Chapter meeting
	• "What Is RAILS? Library Systems and More" presentation to school libraries class at Dominican University
	• "How RAILS Can Help Your School Library Thrive" at Lake County Regional Office of Education Summer Professional Learning event for K-12 teachers, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, administrators, support staff and other educators
	Exhibited at conferences of interest to school libraries, including:

Objectives	Planned Activities
	• Supported and participated in AISLE annual conference as referenced above • Exhibited at IDEACon as referenced above • Staffed table at Kane County Institute Day to connect with teachers, principals, librarians, and others Received 2021 AISLE Pillar award for RAILS' "distinguished and exceptional service and contribution to AISLE and the school library community" Helped address issues/challenges affecting specialized libraries via RAILS' Member Engagement Manager serving on the SLA Illinois Board of Directors, including beginning his term as President in January 2022 • Helped plan 2022 virtual SLA Midwest Symposium • Helped organize Leadership & Management Development Community booth at 2021 SLA virtual annual conference Participated in Specialized Libraries Career Panel hosted by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's School of Information Studies. Approximately 10 students attended to learn more about careers in specialized libraries. Gave presentation about RAILS at the 2021 virtual Health Science Librarians of Illinois (HSLI) Conference. Approximately 30 people attended. **Social Media Communication/Engagement** Regularly utilized RAILS social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) to communicate with and engage members Invited library staff to share unique items from their collections via the #CollectionChallenge. A total of 68 libraries participated via Instagram, 65 libraries participated via Twitter, and 45 libraries participated via Facebook.
Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and are helping to create the best possible future for all of our libraries	Conducted survey to gather feedback on how we could make the weekly *RAILS E-News* a more effective communication tool. Received 479 responses. Began making changes to the *E-News* based on feedback received. See information about other surveys RAILS conducted throughout the year to gather member feedback throughout this document, including the My Library Is… surveys, post CE event surveys, COVID-19 Reopening Survey, and the survey to gather feedback re the new RAILS website.

Objectives	Planned Activities
	Continued to solicit member feedback via other RAILS communication tools and member encounters. Made changes to RAILS programs/services based on member input as appropriate. Hired a Data Research Specialist and continued with efforts to gather and analyze data on Illinois school libraries as referenced above Continued to grow and develop Data in Libraries Pulse Page with dashboards, maps, and other data resources Conducted RAILS online roundtable on "Go-To Databases" Other data-related activities are described elsewhere in this document and include: • Developed a new strategic plan with measurable objectives • Continued development of L2 • Evaluation and analysis of ISL e-book grant project • Recording a *Sparks* podcast interview on how libraries can use data to show their value
Recruit and engage a RAILS Board that is representative of the system membership and that creates and models best practices for board leadership	Communicated regularly with board through board mailing list and other means Kept board informed about important issues for RAILS and for libraries of all types Conducted orientation session for new RAILS Board members. Invited existing board members to attend for a refresher. Continued to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board • Advertised for board candidates that reflected the diversity of the RAILS membership in terms of race, ethnicity, age, geographic location, staff position, background, and other factors • In the FY 2022 board election, one-third of all library staff candidates held positions other than library director, and 29% of all candidates' race/ethnicity was non-white. • Began work on EDI policies for the RAILS Employee Handbook to provide a framework for revising our board recruitment and election process Supported/encouraged board members' conference/meeting attendance as appropriate

Objectives	Planned Activities
Ensure that all aspects of the RAILS organization use and model best practices in all that we do	Modeled effective EDI practices for members by sharing information on the RAILS' activities detailed in other sections of this document See other sections of this document for activities related to modeling best practices, including modeling innovative ways for members to share resources (Inkie.org, Find More Illinois, Explore More Illinois, etc.); modeling effective ways to tell the library story; modeling effective ways to evaluate the impact of programs/services; etc.
Deliver on the promise of organizational excellence by being agile, innovative, future-oriented, and member-focused	Developed a new RAILS Strategic Plan that was passed by the RAILS Board on January 28, 2022, including new mission and vision statements - Hired a consultant to help with the process - Formed a steering committee composed of RAILS staff, board members, and staff from members libraries of all types to help guide the process - Communicated regularly with RAILS Board, staff, and members throughout the process and solicited their feedback - Conducted a series of town halls and focus groups to get as much feedback on the new plan from members as possible. Obtained feedback from over 1,000 members. - Publicized the new plan via a variety of RAILS communication tools and member encounters - Conducted podcast with consultant RAILS used to develop strategic plan, including advice on strategic plans in general - Conducted podcast on RAILS strategic plan **Support & Develop RAILS Staff** Recruited RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and objectives. Actively sought staff diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and other factors. Encouraged/supported professional development for staff Held regular staff meetings to keep all staff informed of the latest RAILS developments and to help staff at different service centers engage with each other. Conducted survey of staff to determine how we might increase the effectiveness of staff meetings. Continued to develop and promote a RAILS Staff EDI Initiative as referenced above. Began work on EDI policies for inclusion in the RAILS Employee Handbook.

Objectives	Planned Activities
	Developed/revised COVID policies and guidelines to meet changing conditions in the outside world and to keep staff as safe as possible • Met with IHLS on vaccination and testing procedures to learn more about their policies to determine what we might implement • Continued to update best practice and procedures in keeping with updated recommendations from the CDC and public health departments. **Maintain Robust Technology Infrastructure** Performed necessary infrastructure work, including replacing host and storage servers and remote location routers Completed the ongoing projects to distribute new staff laptops and to transition to Office 365 for staff email Investigated and implemented new Zoom telephone system Moved forward on development of a delivery app, and rolled out iPads and app to delivery staff After a period of development and testing, launched a new HR App to streamline the entire RAILS recruitment process Continued providing subsidized Zoom and conference calling accounts to appropriate RAILS member groups Laid the groundwork to address new requirements related to cybersecurity, such as requiring multi-factor authentication Checked with all member library locations that have been housing RAILS Polycom equipment to see if they were still willing to serve as a videoconference location. (We will use FY 2023 as a learning year before purchasing new equipment or finding new locations to see if libraries continue to prefer Zoom meetings.)
Engage in innovative projects on a statewide, national, and international level and help RAILS members model these projects for their community of users	See other sections of this document for additional information on innovative statewide projects, including Find More Illinois, Inkie.org, Explore More Illinois, My Library Is… campaign, L2, etc.

Objectives	Planned Activities
Provide excellent stewardship of RAILS financial resources to ensure maximum benefit to member libraries, library users, and Illinois taxpayers	Identified and implemented structural changes, expense reductions, and revenue increases to eliminate a deficit budget by June 30, 2022 • Worked with other partners/stakeholders to advocate for an increase in the Area and Per Capita grant • Identified RAILS budget items/projects where we could ask for ISL funding assistance, including L2 and the World Language Cataloging Program • Conducted internal restructuring to reduce expenditures, including in the HR/Finance Department • Worked with LLSAPs to develop ways to restructure LLSAP financial support (to take effect in FY 2023) • Monitored FY 2022 expenses very closely with the goal of ending the year under budget • Reviewed Delivery Outsourcing RFP responses and the potential impact of our decisions on facility and other costs Closely monitored RAILS investments and made changes as appropriate Continued to investigate and find efficiencies and cost savings, primarily through the budgeting and financial reporting processes, for RAILS operations
Maintain a research and development role to provide leadership and innovation to help members provide the best possible service to their customers	See other sections of this document for activities related to research and development, including our work with GeoMARC, evaluation/data activities, etc.