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Executive Director Report, October, 2022

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

The Advocacy committee has set priorities for their work this year. They have voted to focus on the issues below in chronological order:

- Find More Illinois
- Legislative proposals for statewide online resources and records retention changes
- School libraries
- Materials challenges
- Specialized libraries
- Open educational resources

Of course, RAILS staff will be working on all of these goals as necessary, but we will be able to focus more specifically on a single goal on a monthly basis, and provide talking points for committee members at that time. We will discuss the success of the talking points at the following meeting.

I am very pleased to report that Explore more Illinois has added the Museum of Science and Industry. This is the first of the large Chicago museums to join, but we anticipate more in the spring.

The ILA Annual Conference was a spectacular, personal occasion for me. Thanks so much to board members and staff for the amazing reception on Tuesday night. I was completely overwhelmed. I am so appreciative of all the kind words from everyone. I will reiterate that it is a team effort, and I am enormously proud to lead our team.

Our booth was very popular, as always. We had demos of FMI and Explore More throughout the exhibit hours.

Ryan Livergood, PPC chair, announced at the ILA conference that the top two priorities selected by the ILA Executive Board are the statewide online resources proposal and amending the Local Records Act.

I will be attending the AISLE conference November 4 in Tinley Park, as will other RAILS staff.

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

The Board EDI committee meets November 2 and will be discussing the committee charge, the strategic plan EDI goals, a vision for the committee's overall work and ways to motivate library directors to undertake EDI work.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

ISLAC meets on October 27; I will have a report at the meeting.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Our member update on September 29 was lively and very well attended. Greg McCormick was present to talk about the recently passed law enabling the Secretary of State to fill long-term trustee vacancies. We also discussed other legislation including the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act and the RAILS online resources proposal, revisions to the Local Records Act, implementation of Cards For Kids. We also presented updated information on a variety of RAILS services:

- RAILS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plans for FY 2023
- Find More Illinois Special Offer
- World Languages Cataloging Program
- RAILS Continuing Education
- Explore More Illinois – Jessica Barnes
- New and upcoming RAILS deals and discounts

I attended the grand reopening reception for the Joliet Public Library main branch. I recommend that you all visit this amazing renovation of the Daniel Burnham-designed building.



This Month at RAILS – October 2022

THE TOP THREE

In response to board member feedback, each month we 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:

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

RAILS encourages all school library staff attending the AISLE conference to visit exhibit booth #706 to learn more about all the programs/services RAILS offers just for school libraries. Exhibit hours are Friday, November 4, from 7:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

You can also hear more about the RAILS school library data project by attending the program, "By the Numbers: School Library Advocacy through Data," on Friday, November 4, from 10:15 – 11:00 a.m.

Request a RAILS Visit to Your Library

RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom is visiting member libraries that have not had a RAILS staff member visit in person or virtually recently, or libraries that are unfamiliar with RAILS services. He can speak to directors, managers, and/or frontline staff about RAILS programs/services that can benefit your library directly. All types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) can request a visit [using the form](#) on the RAILS website in the Members/Member Engagement section.

RAILS Launches Data Networking in School Libraries Group

RAILS is starting a new group to help school library staff interested in collecting and analyzing data to share new ideas and methods. The first Zoom meeting is Wednesday, November 16, from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. [Register via Zoom.](#)

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

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

RAILS is a Platinum Sponsor for the [AISLE Conference](#), November 3 – 5, at the Tinley Park Convention Center. We are sponsoring the Friday lunch business meeting and the Saturday luncheon. Please encourage all school library staff attending the conference to visit us at exhibit booth #706. Exhibit hours are Friday, November 4 from 7:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki and RAILS Data Analysis Manager Grant Halter are also presenting a session on our school library data project: "By the Numbers: School Library Advocacy through Data," on Friday, November 4 from 10:15 – 11:00 a.m. They will present information about the project, including an overview, findings, advocacy efforts, and data tools, all in a fun Jeopardy format.

Preliminary Report on RAILS Booth at ILA Conference

RAILS had a double booth at the October Illinois Library Association (ILA) conference. The booth featured live demos of different RAILS programs/services, including [Find More Illinois](#), [Explore More Illinois](#), [inkie.org](#), [eRead Illinois](#), [Career Online High School](#), and [L2 \(Library Directory & Learning Calendar\)](#); a whiteboard where booth visitors could practice talking about their libraries by completing a sentence beginning with My Library Is...; opportunities to win four Barnes & Noble gift cards; and much more.

We'll report on the success of these engagement efforts in the November *This Month at RAILS*.

RAILS on the Road

Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom has a goal to visit 20 RAILS member libraries by the end of the year. He's particularly interested in visiting libraries that have not had a RAILS staff member visit in the past two years (including virtual visits), and/or libraries that:

- Do not participate in Find More Illinois
- Do not participate in eRead Illinois
- Do not participate in Explore More Illinois
- Do not participate in a shared catalog
- Do not have a staff member on the RAILS Board or a board subcommittee

Any library type (academic, public, school, or special) [can request a visit](#) via the RAILS website. Dan is looking forward to speaking with directors, managers, and/or front-line staff about L2, continuing education, grants, RAILS e-resources, and more, and to hearing about what is happening at our member libraries.

Data Networking in School Libraries Group

RAILS is launching a new Data Networking in School Libraries Group to help school library workers interested in collecting and analyzing data more effectively. The first meeting is [Wednesday, November 16, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.](#) via Zoom. Topics will include needs and interests of group members, potential topics for future meetings, and future meeting dates. Any library worker from any Illinois library is invited to attend and to bring ideas and suggestions.

RAILS September 29 Member Update Recording Available

The recording from the [September 29 RAILS Member Update](#) is now available on the RAILS YouTube page. Topics include updates on new and proposed legislation, including filling public library trustee vacancies, RAILS' Statewide Access to Online Resources proposal, the Cards for Kids Act, and the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act. We also gave updates on our strategic plan and RAILS services and activities, and shared information about our School Library Data Project.

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

Swank Group Purchase Sign-Up and Renewal

[Swank](#) Movie Licensing USA offers RAILS public libraries a special, discounted rate for their annual public performance license. RAILS public libraries currently participating in the RAILS group purchase or libraries not covered by a Swank license must renew/sign up for the group purchase by November 30, 2022. Library staff can visit the RAILS [Deals & Discounts page](#) and log in using their L2 email and password to view pricing for their library and to opt-in to the deal. The license is valid from January 1 - December 31, 2023.

BookBrowse for Libraries Sign-Up and Renewal

[BookBrowse for Libraries](#) is an award-winning readers' advisory resource for library staff and patrons. Libraries must renew/sign up for the group purchase by December. For further information and pricing, libraries can visit the [RAILS Deals & Discounts page](#). The RAILS group annual subscription begins on January 1, 2023.

Career Online High School (COHS) Update

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program. RAILS coordinates and administers the program for libraries statewide and negotiates lower fees for the scholarships that participating libraries award to students.

The following table provides the latest information on the program as of October 1.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
350	157	95	62%/53%

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

Latest eRead Illinois News

RAILS' [eRead Illinois Axis 360](#) collection includes e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and children with very reasonable pricing. Baker & Taylor, our eRead vendor, continues to work through residual issues from the ransomware attack they experienced in August (see last month's RAILS Board report). RAILS staff can add items to the eRead Illinois Axis 360 collection, however, there have been delays acquiring titles before their publish date as well as accessing interactive dashboard reports. Baker & Taylor continues to work on resolving these issues.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
September 2022	24,396	16,651	41,047
FY 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023)	61,353	47,834	109,187

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
September 2022	1,733
FY 2023	4,730

Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' statewide online cultural and recreational pass program. As of October 11, 410 Illinois libraries participate (325 RAILS and 85 Illinois Heartland Library System libraries) and there are [48 attractions](#).



In September and early October, Explore More Illinois added the DuPage Symphony Orchestra in Naperville and the [Museum of Science and Industry](#) in Chicago.

A total of 41 reservations were made in September. The most popular attractions in September measured by number of reservations were the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (8), Peoria Riverfront Museum (6), Chicago Children's Museum (6), Fox River Grove Memorial Public Library (4) and Wheels O' Time Museum in Dunlap (3).

Lincoln Land Community College is the second community college to join Explore More Illinois through our pilot program (Illinois Central College was the first). They are beginning to promote the program to students and staff.

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

RAILS EDI Learning Cohort Update

The RAILS EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Learning Cohort began on October 13 for 38 RAILS members who will participate in monthly sessions through May 2023. The initial session focused on foundations of EDI, including terminology, definitions, and other relevant concepts. Following each session, participants will engage in assigned readings and reflection exercises to further their understanding of each monthly topic.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

Spots Still Available for “Keys to Being a Better Library Trustee” Webinar Series

There’s still room in the webinar series with parliamentarian Nancy Sylvester mentioned in last month’s board report. The first session on October 29 will focus on board governance. The second session on parliamentary procedure will be held November 12. Both sessions will run from 10 a.m. – noon.

You only need to [register once on L2](#) to attend one or both sessions. Each session will be recorded and made available to anyone who registers.

Other Upcoming RAILS CE

“Dealing with Challenging Situations” Workshop

The same workshop will be held from 9:30 to noon at three different locations. Register via L2 for one of the following:

- November 1: [Messenger Public Library of North Aurora](#)
- November 2: [East Moline Public Library](#)
- November 3: [Morton Public Library District](#)

“Job Descriptions: Why, What, and How?” Zoom webinar

- [Tuesday, November 8](#), 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

RAILS Participates in REALM Symposium

Monica Harris, RAILS Associate Executive Director, recently attended the virtual REALM (Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums) Symposium. The two-day event focused on community resilience, health equity, the importance of trustworthiness, and the REALM Crisis Management Toolkit. About 150 representatives from a variety of cultural heritage institutions, public health, and other organizations were invited to participate and contribute.

October Meeting with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, ISL

RAILS had our monthly meeting 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) on October 4 to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries. Topics included an update on RAILS’ school library data project, the upcoming ILA and AISLE conferences, materials challenges, and the possibility of holding a virtual Directors University type event for school libraries in 2023.

Seek to understand member perceptions of inequities in system services

RAILS at Association of Rural and Small Libraries Conference

Leila Heath, Director of Library Resources & Programs, and Diana Rusch, Consulting & Continuing Education Specialist, attended the ARSL (Association of Rural and Small Libraries) annual conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee in September.

Leila met with vendors and attended several interesting programs and networking events. Programs Diana found particularly interesting included:

- “Effective Staff Evaluations Made Easy,” where the Director of the Mount Angel Public Library in Oregon shared methods she developed to streamline the staff evaluation process; and
- “Drafting A Diversity Plan for Your Library,” where the Librarian and Instructional Designer at Niche Academy in Montana discussed the importance of having a diversity plan and how that plan can be integrated into action items that provide direction for the library.

The conference was well-organized and provided many opportunities to connect with and learn from other libraries. Since RAILS has 219 member libraries who provide services to populations under 10,000, attending the conference helped us stay attune to the issues facing these libraries.

A top concern expressed by many ARSL participants was the need for continued support and resources from the American Library Association and state library associations concerning First Amendment Audits, censorship challenges, and other related issues. As an example, the marketing coordinator of a seven-library consortium in Idaho shared that despite the town being a ski haven for celebrities (Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Reynolds had just been there), libraries are battling on the front lines. One of the seven libraries had residents marching outside the library with rifles. Safety in these times is also a big concern.

Crisis in Specialized Libraries Presentation at 2022 ILA Annual Conference

RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom moderated a panel of specialized library workers at the 2022 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference: “The Crisis in Specialized Libraries: Survival in a Catch-All Field.” The session included a discussion of the trends in specialized librarianship, how titles & responsibilities are changing, and how people can become more involved in this field.