

January 5, 2023

TO: RAILS Board of Directors
FROM: Janette Derucki
SUBJECT: RAILS Service Inequities Study

In accordance with Strategic Goal #4, Objective 2 of the 2022-2025 RAILS Strategic Plan, which states: *“RAILS will continually seek to understand member perceptions of inequities in system services to better support academic, school, and specialized libraries, as well as public libraries of all sizes,”* RAILS has undertaken an exploratory research project to examine member perceptions of service inequity as expressed during the strategic planning process. The purpose is to understand and evaluate member perceptions of inequity, to identify RAILS methods and levels of member engagement, and to propose actions to ensure service equity. The focus of this study will center on those library types mentioned specifically by Strategic Goal #4, Objective 2 and how RAILS serves and supports them.

Initial work includes research about multitype library systems in Illinois and similar states, collection and analysis of data regarding RAILS engagement and services, and interviews with RAILS Staff and Board members affiliated with academic, school, special, and public libraries. Early findings validate the existence of perceived inequities among library types, as well as within some library sectors, identify current RAILS services and engagement across library types, reveal potential challenges, and suggest potential action and further investigation. Interviews and data analysis are ongoing; immediate next steps include the formation of focus groups representing member libraries across the RAILS service area.

This study began in November 2022 and continues until June 2023; the project timeline and planned activities are shown below:

November 2022 - January 2023	Project Planning Data Collection/Analysis Initial Interviews
February 2023	Interviews Continue Data Collection/Analysis Continues Establish Focus Groups Preliminary Report of Initial Findings
March - May 2023	Focus Group Meetings (monthly) Research: Programs and Services Follow-up Interviews
June 2023	Final Report/Recommendations