RAILS Report

FY2024 Consortia Committee representatives

Mary Kate Murray will be reaching out to your groups soon to inquire about your group's FY2024 representative(s) on the Consortia Committee. The six catalog consortia within RAILS (CCS, PrairieCat, Pinnacle, RRLC, RSA, and SWAN) may each designate one voting member, and optionally designate an alternate. Appointment of representatives for successive terms is strongly encouraged to provide more continuity. The representative does *not* need to be an officer on the consortium's board. Ex officio members include the RAILS Board President; RAILS Executive Director; RAILS Director of Technology Services; one representative from the Illinois State Library; and one representative from the Illinois Heartland Library System, as designated by the IHLS Executive Director.

Librarylearning.org (L2) updates and governance

As of this writing, a major update to L2 is scheduled for Sunday, April 23. This update includes improvements to the design and user experience, particularly in the calendar. The L2 Governing Group (L2G2), a statewide advisory group helping to provide strategic direction for the open source L2 software, continues to discuss other priorities and needed features, including additional reports and documentation. Kathleen Weiss (CCS) will step in as L2G2's first Chair at their May 2 meeting.

RAILS also recently helped PrairieCat implement modules that use the L2 API for user logins and for importing library and event data on their new website. Any partner/sponsor organization that wishes to use the L2 API for directory or calendar event data may request access by emailing help@librarylearning.org.

Find More Illinois incentive program extension

The [Find More Illinois](#) incentive program has been extended again! Libraries that join before December 31, 2023 will have all of their one-time setup fees waived. Participation in the program continues to expand; we now have 55 libraries using Find More Illinois to seamlessly share resources across 22 standalone and five consortial catalogs. We're looking forward to welcoming our first specialized library, the Old Town School of Folk Music, to the program as they complete their training this month and officially go live. We are also currently working with CARLI staff to create a process for I-Share libraries to join the program.

School library data project

In response to large gaps in the data representing Illinois school libraries discovered by the SLIDE Project, in January 2022 RAILS launched the School Library Data Project. The goal of our project is to gather data related to the staff, collections, and financial resources of school libraries to provide them with better targeted resources and support. This data is being gathered from several resources including National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois State Library, Dominican University iSchool, Illinois Heartland Library System, L2: Library Directory & Learning Calendar, and Individual Schools, Districts & Library Staff. RAILS has also formed a team of school librarians to help brainstorm, mold, and evaluate the online data dashboard tool we're creating to display school library data. This tool will be available soon. In the meantime, you can see additional insights and visualizations in the project's online resource.

Broadband expansion and digital equity

The Illinois Broadband Lab, in partnership with the Illinois Office of Broadband, is conducting a statewide listening tour to gather information from residents and stakeholders that will inform the development of the state's Digital Equity Plan. This plan is a requirement established by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for any states applying for federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's (BIL) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity (DE) programs. RAILS encourages our members and partners to attend and contribute to these sessions to help ensure that library and patron voices are heard and represented in the plan. Anne Slaughter is also working with the Office of Broadband's Broadband Advisory Council and Digital Equity Coalition to represent libraries and connect with other organizations working to advance digital equity and technology adoption in Illinois. To keep up with these and related efforts, anyone can subscribe to the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society's Illinois Broadband Connections newsletter, published in collaboration with the Illinois Office of Broadband.

Pending legislation

RAILS continues to closely monitor legislation related to libraries and share information via our enews as it becomes available. In addition to Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias's proposed budget, he has sponsored the following two bills. Illinois House Bill 2789 would require public and school libraries to adopt policies against censorship and book banning to receive grant funding from the Illinois State Library. Illinois Senate Bill 2419 is focused on allowing the State Librarian to negotiate with publishers of e-books and e-audiobooks on behalf of libraries in search of reasonable terms and would also allow the State Librarian to award grants that develop, expand, or support the acquisition of e-books and e-audiobooks in Illinois.

Decennial Efficiency Act

Ancel Glink provided a memo that includes an FAQ about the Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency Act and a sample report for compliance for libraries. The memo has been posted to the Policy & Human Resources Guidance for Libraries page on the RAILS website.

RSA and PrairieCat facilitated meeting

The RSA Executive Committee, PrairieCat Administrative Council, and representatives from RAILS met on Tuesday, December 6 for a meeting facilitated by consultant John Newton to discuss possible partnership opportunities between RSA and PrairieCat, as one facet of RSA's efforts toward greater financial and operational independence from RAILS. In an open-ended discussion, both organizations voiced concerns and challenges, as well as possible benefits to merging. Overall, while positives were acknowledged (increased patron access to materials and services, greater influence and negotiating power with vendors), they were outweighed by the challenges identified (primarily regarding the viability of a combined organization at that scale and limited alignment of the organizations' current strategic priorities and initiatives), and the consensus was not to pursue partnership at this time. RSA continues to work toward their goals, which include a transition from a Not-For-Profit to an Illinois Intergovernmental Instrumentality, employing their own staff, and providing or contracting for their own IT and other operational and administrative services. RAILS remains committed to providing strategic and tactical support for this project, in addition to our ongoing support via the annual LLSAP Support Grant.

Executive Director Meet and Greets

A series of meet and greets across the RAILS service area is providing opportunities for all levels of staff at all types of RAILS libraries to meet Monica Harris, RAILS' new Executive Director. These events have also been a great opportunity to connect with our members in person and hear about their priorities and challenges. We welcome consortial staff to attend and would appreciate your sharing these opportunities with your member libraries as well. Please register for upcoming sessions through the links below.

- Coal Valley Service Center, Thursday, April 27, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.
- Rockford Public Library, Wednesday, May 3, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
- Algonquin Area Public Library District, Wednesday, May 10, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.
- Quincy Public Library, Thursday, May 18, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

New RAILS website

RAILS launched our new website at railslibraries.org in March. Newly redesigned websites dedicated to our individual services (Find More Illinois, eRead Illinois, My Library Is, Explore More Illinois, and Inkie.org) will follow in the near future. This launch also involved a transition of email lists from Mailman to the LISTSERV platform.