
The Universal Service Committee Meeting June 8, 2023 Draft Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order
Alice Creason, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm
2. Roll Call of Committee Members
Krempl called roll of the board members:
Coal Valley: Beth Tepen
Cherry Valley PL: Lynn Stainbrook
Lewis University: Alice Creason and Jennifer McIntosh.
Absent: Carol Medal and Becky Spratford
3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements
Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Stacy Palmisano, Renya Krempl (designated minute taker)
Zoom: Greg McCormick, Diane Hollister, Ashley Spada
4. Public Comments
There were no public comments.
5. Consent Agenda –
 - 5.1. Adoption of the Agenda
 - 5.2. Approval of the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee Minutes of March 7, 2023
Stainbrook moved for the approval of the consent agenda. Tepen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.
6. Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) Update
Harris reported that a comprehensive discussion on broadband, led by Anne Slaughter and Troy Brown of IHLS, took place at the ISLAC meeting on May 18th. The discussion provided an overview of the current efforts regarding broadband, digital inclusion, and the role of libraries in Illinois. The Secretary of State's office is also very interested in these topics. Further conversations took place between a representative of the Secretary of State's office, Anne Slaughter, and Troy Brown. Current equalization aid for public libraries was also discussed at the ISLAC meeting, as it had not changed since 2009. HB2789 has passed both the House and the Senate and is expected to be signed by the Governor next week. Similarly, SB2419, The License to Read Act, which allows the Secretary of State to negotiate terms with e-Books publishers, is also awaiting the governor's signature. The work of the Illinois Digital Heritage Hub was moved to CARLI. ISLAC Subcommittees are being formed to work on issues of universal service and diversity. The next ISLAC meeting is scheduled for July 27th, 2023.

Final vote or action may be taken at the meeting on any agenda item subject matter listed above unless the agenda item specifically states otherwise.

7. Unfinished Business

7.1. Multiple Listing Service Update

Harris reported that the request to add library names to the MLS listing was submitted but there is no update yet.

7.2. Statewide Online Educational Resource Program Update Harris expressed gratitude to the Secretary of State for including \$5 million for statewide online databases in the FY2024 budget. This is a valuable solution not only for libraries across Illinois but also for underserved populations. There is no further information from the State at this point, but the Systems and CARLI will be contacted for their input shortly. McCormick stated that ISL had closely examined other state models, especially in Michigan and New York. The program would be available to the unserved population. He believes a similar package to Michigan's is achievable, but it will need to go through the State procurement process. He recommended that libraries do not cancel any services until it is clear what is available. The program will probably not be centralized at the state level, but the unserved population could potentially become patrons of the State Library for the purpose of the program.

7.3. Revision of the Committee Charge (to include underserved language)

The committee discussed whether to expand its charge to include underserved populations. They decided that this would be too expansive as a focus and that the committee should focus on universal solutions for the unserved population. The committee also discussed whether the equalization grant affects the issue of underserved populations and the possibility of Advocacy or Resource Sharing committees including underserved populations in their work.

8. New Business

8.1. Paper Libraries

Filapek defined the concept of "paper libraries," which are library districts that exist on paper or in name only. These districts are concentrated in one area and were formed to preserve extremely low tax rates. As a result, the library district's funds are so low that it is impossible for the district to even contract for services with a neighboring library. Filapek clarified that this is not a common practice, with only a total of 6 paper libraries in RAILS territory and a couple in IHLS. He also distinguished between paper libraries and districts that do not have a library but enter into contractual agreements with other libraries to provide library services. In these cases, residents are taxed at a more adequate rate.

RAILS has received inquiries from residents of paper library districts who are interested in obtaining library services. He observed confusion among libraries about how to handle these situations. Some libraries do not allow residents of paper library districts to purchase out-of-district library cards because they are already taxed and have a library district, leaving them in a vacuum. Filapek said that it would be necessary to clarify this issue with libraries so that these residents could purchase non-resident library cards. He added that in some cases, a neighboring library may be too far away. To the best of his knowledge, local school libraries do not serve those patrons. He took note of the questions submitted by the members and will research further. He also reiterated that it would be important that unserved patrons are able to purchase an out-of-district library card.

8.2. Additional Guidance for Cards for Kids Expansion

Filapek referred to Public Act 102-084, which took effect in May 2022. This act allowed library boards to vote to expand the Cards for Kids program and offer cards to unserved residents under 18 years old, regardless of their ability to pay. Recently, Filapek received inquiries from members wanting to implement that expansion, seeking clarity regarding the rules of the program. Some libraries created additional exception categories in their fee schedule, for example for kids under 18 or veterans. He questioned whether RAILS should be doing more to support those efforts. Creason suggested that example policy language would be very helpful. Filapek added that RAILS does not have accurate information about the number of libraries which have decided to take that action. McCormick offered to have that question added to the Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR).

8.3. Committee Member FY2024 Terms

Harris reminded the committee that this was the last meeting of the current fiscal year and that there were no specific dates for members' terms to expire. However, some members were leaving the board or resigned, and new board members are anticipated to join the committee. RAILS will be looking into adding new committee members to several committees, including the Universal Services Committee. Harris thanked the group for their work and said that RAILS staff would be reaching out to them to confirm their participation in FY2024.

8.4. FY2024 Meeting Schedule

Harris put the proposed schedule to the vote. Stainbrook moved to approve it, McIntosh seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

9. Meeting recap and agenda building for the next RAILS Board Universal Service Committee Meeting

Stainbrook reported on her advocacy visit in Washington DC. Together with PLA and consortium members, she represented Illinois in advocacy work with federal legislators. The delegation met with Illinois Senator Dick Durbin's Chief of Staff who shared her personal story of how her local library was helpful to her. Other staffers asked questions about censorship challenges facing libraries. They also met with Congressman Darin LaHood's staff who was interested in e-book issues.

The topics of ISLAC updates, the MLS update, a Statewide Online Educational Resource update, and a broadband overview and update will be on the agenda for the next meeting on Thursday, September 7, 2023.10. Adjournment

Creason adjourned the meeting at 2:12 pm.