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Executive Director Report, September 2023

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Safety and Security in Illinois Libraries

I have been frustrated and heartbroken about the current rash of bomb threats that have affected public libraries in the RAILS membership. These threats are disruptive to the community and punishing for staff at all levels. We appreciate the vocal support of Secretary Alexi Giannoulias, as well as the many library support agencies statewide and nationally who are offering help and support as our libraries navigate this unprecedented moment.

Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, and myself are meeting this week with several library directors who have received these threats, and we hope to hear from them about their shared experiences and determine what resources and help would be useful to them moving forward. Representatives from ILA will also join us. We also plan to offer additional resources, trainings, and networking round the topic of safety in libraries as we approach the path forward.

My sincere thanks to my library colleagues who are showing incredible leadership and strength during this difficult time. We will do our very best to meet your needs and work with our partners to find solutions together.

Banning Book Bans: Comment Period on Public Act 103-0100 Now Open

The Secretary of State's proposed amendments related to [Public Act 103-0100](#) prohibiting book banning appears in the [September 8 issue](#) of the Illinois Register beginning on page 87. The comment period for these proposed amendments runs **through October 20**. RAILS will publicize these proposed amendments to our membership and encourage any feedback on the impacts of these rule changes.

Book Challenges on the Rise: Support Your Freedom to Read Event on October 2 at 7pm

This Banned Books Week program, moderated by syndicated columnist Heidi Stevens, will share how to effectively support intellectual freedom. We will examine the current state of book challenges, Illinois' legislative response, and the implications of censorship on communities with this panel of experts:

Alexi Giannoulias, Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian
Monica Harris, Executive Director at Reaching Across Illinois Library System
Jasmine Warga, author of challenged books "The Shape of Thunder" and "Other Words for Home"
Jarrett Dapier, author of challenged picture books and freedom to read advocate

This presentation is co-hosted by more than 75 Illinois libraries. [Registration](#) is now available.

RAILS Minute

The most recent [RAILS Minute](#) focused on several current topics, including Banned Books Week and collaboration with our sister system, Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS). We also discussed upcoming annual conferences for AISLE and ILA, and a presentation about the School Library Data Dashboard. New this month – the RAILS Minute has been added to Apple Podcasts, so be sure to add it to your feed! Thanks to Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist Ola Gronski and Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom for all their continued work on this offering.

Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos

RAILS members can find information, trial access, and pricing on all deals and discounts by logging into the [RAILS Deals & Discounts page](#).

On August 22, Leila Heath met with Cassandra Thompson, IHLS Share Director, to discuss vendor sponsorships for the eRead 10-Year Anniversary Party at ILA.

Anna Behm attended the Resource Sharing Committee meeting on August 31. She gave a brief presentation about e-content consortia in Illinois as well as an overview of eRead Illinois.

Anna Behm, Joe Filapek and the RAILS Marketing team met with staff from IHLS on September 12 to discuss the eRead Illinois 10-year anniversary event the systems will be co-hosting at the ILA annual conference.

In August, Jody Rubel managed the renewal subscriptions for BiblioBoard Creator, a tool for creating and publishing multimedia content. The negotiated pricing resulted in more than a \$42,000 savings for participating member libraries. Over 12 public libraries subscribe to this statewide deal.

RAILS Discount for Gale Early Literacy Database Package

RAILS public libraries are now eligible for advantageous pricing for a database package focused on early literacy. These databases include Gale In Context: Elementary, Gale Presents: National Geographic Kids, and Miss Humblebee's Academy. **Gale In Context: Elementary** provides young learners with one place to search for answers and explore their interests—inside and outside of the classroom. **Gale Presents: National Geographic Kids** takes them on amazing adventures in science, nature, wildlife, culture, geography, archaeology, and space. Designed for children ages 3 to 6, **Miss Humblebee's Academy** is an easy-to-use, interactive online solution for kindergarten readiness. For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, [visit the Gale Early Literacy Database Package Deals & Discounts page](#).

RAILS Discount and Webinar for ProQuest, part of Clarivate: O'Reilly for Public Libraries

O'Reilly for Public Libraries, exclusively available via ProQuest, connects users to in-demand technology and business resources in a modern digital learning ecosystem. More than 50,000 e-books, over 30,000 hours of video, and resources such as audiobooks, courses, case studies, and expert playlists make O'Reilly a valuable resource for everyone from students to job seekers to learn today's technologies. Members [can register for the "ProQuest, part of Clarivate: O'Reilly for Public Libraries" information webinar on Thursday, September 28 at 11 a.m.](#) For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, [visit the ProQuest, part of Clarivate: O'Reilly for Public Libraries Deals & Discounts page](#).

Career Online High School (COHS)

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program. The following table provides the latest information on the use of the program as of July 30.

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
400	175	109	60%/53%

Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' statewide online cultural and recreational pass program. As of August 31, 425 Illinois libraries participate: 333 RAILS public libraries and three community colleges, 88 Illinois Heartland Library System public libraries and Chicago Public Library. There are 63 attractions.



In August 2023, 3,842 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in July were Brookfield Zoo (500), Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200), DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (71), Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (36), and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield (33). The most popular Chicago attractions in July were Museum of Science and Industry (765), Field Museum (592), Art Institute (436), Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (408), and Chicago Children's Museum (350).

Jessica Barnes organized and facilitated a quarterly meeting with other ePass users on August 29, with 12 people in attendance.

eRead Illinois Update

Anna Behm and Karen Goyer fielded questions from eRead Illinois member libraries about the transition to the Boundless platform. Axis 360 is scheduled to switch to Boundless on September 26 and 27.

Anna Behm gave a roundtable presentation with Dan Bostrom on August 22 about e-content for school libraries. This presentation updated the roundtable they did in August 2020, and provided updated information about eRead Illinois, the transition from Axis 360 to Boundless, and the Inkie.org Library. 19 people signed up.

Baker & Taylor hosted a training webinar about Boundless for eRead Illinois member libraries on August 15. The training incorporated updates Baker & Taylor has made to the platform based on feedback they received from eRead Illinois member libraries.

Anna Behm met with Danielle Beasley from IHLS on August 16 to discuss agenda building for the eRead Illinois 10-year Anniversary Party at the ILA annual conference.

RAILS's longtime Axis 360 sales representative, Pat Moore, left Baker & Taylor at the end of August.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Axis 360 Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
August 2023	17,539	16,109	33,648
FY 2024 (July 2023 – June 2024)	32,479	31,279	63,758

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
August 2023	1,603
FY 2024	2,991

Find More Illinois

[Find More Illinois](#) is It's an interlibrary loan platform that provides access to a growing number of library holdings in one seamless interface. Libraries of all types and sizes can join, no matter what kind of catalog software they use. Find More Illinois is growing quickly, which makes it an even better resource for all participating libraries to expand the materials available to their patrons.

West Chicago Community High School District #94 has begun the onboarding process within Find More Illinois.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our August social media engagement efforts.

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

RAILS Collaborates with Northbrook Public Library on Additional De-Escalation and Resiliency Training

As part of our collaboration with the Northbrook Public Library, RAILS will offer two additional webinars presented by speakers from the organization [Right To Be](#) later this year. Conflict de-escalation training will be offered in November and followed in December by a session focused on building personal resilience. Watch RAILS E-News for more information later this month.

RAILS Partners with Dominican University on IMLS Grant Application

RAILS was approached by Dominican University with a request to support their IMLS grant application *Exploring User-Informed Approaches to Enhancing Library Metadata for the LGBTQ+ Community*. This proposed project would seek to better understand how adult LGBTQ+ users understand current library catalogs and the associated metadata, and how this metadata could be enhanced to better reflect the language, needs and uses of LGBTQ+ library users. The primary role of RAILS in this grant would be to help locate libraries who would help recruit current and potential public library users who identify and LGBTQ+ for participation in a user study. Dominican and its partner organizations would begin this project in August of 2024 should they be awarded this IMLS grant.

RAILS Equity Analysis Employee Handbook Review

Our EDI Consultant, Biz Lindsay Ryan, has completed her first analysis of the existing RAILS employee handbook from an equity lens. The potential changes will first be reviewed by RAILS Staff, and we will meet again with Biz for clarification and further revisions. We expect to begin reviewing the handbook in more detail following the potential equity changes, and will begin work with the RAILS Board Policy Committee later this Fall.

RAILS EDI Learning Cohort Article for the ILA Reporter

RAILS Consulting and Continuing Education Specialist Diana Rusch and Gail Borden Public Library's Katie Clausen have co-authored an article about the [RAILS EDI Learning Cohort](#) for the September issue of the ILA Reporter. In the article they share the experience (through an interview with Katie) of this focused learning cohort of nearly 40 staff from RAILS member libraries who participated in the program from October 2022 through May 2023.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

More Than 300 Applications for the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium

More than 300 school library workers in Illinois have applied to attend the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium. This event will be held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023. This event is designed for individuals who are working in school libraries with no formal library education, certified or non-certified, paraprofessionals, and those considering getting a school library endorsement. This is the first year for this event.

Dan Bostrom Presents at PrairieCat Back to School Event

On Tuesday, September 12, RAILS Member Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom gave a presentation at the PrairieCat Back to School Day. This event was designed for school libraries to hear the latest from PrairieCat and other organizations on new procedures. 11 people attended live. This event was recorded.

Libraries Included in Illinois Broadband Lab Webinar Series

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter recently presented on the value of Illinois libraries in digital equity during an Illinois Broadband Lab webinar on [Adoption, Affordability, & Digital Inclusion](#). This webinar is part of a [larger series](#) discussing community roles in broadband and digital equity issues and opportunities. All recordings from this

series are also posted in a [YouTube playlist](#). The [Illinois Broadband Lab](#) is a collaboration on broadband data, mapping, research, and publication driven by the Illinois Office of Broadband and the University of Illinois System.

SLA Illinois Tour at Shorefront Legacy Center

On Wednesday, August 16, SLA Illinois hosted a tour of the Shorefront Legacy Center in Evanston. 5 people participated in this event. The Shorefront Legacy Center collects, preserves and educates people on Black history on Chicago's suburban North Shore. Shorefront is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit historical organization. The event included a tour and an opportunity to connect/network with colleagues.

Applications Now Being Accepted for RAILS Continuing Education Event Grants

RAILS again invites member networking groups, consortia, and libraries to apply for a [RAILS Continuing Education Event Grant](#). This grant supports CE events for RAILS member libraries towards the development of library staff and trustees. To qualify, CE events must be made available to all RAILS member library staff. RAILS will prioritize events focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, but will consider applications for all other CE topics of broad interest. The maximum grant award is \$2,000.

There will be two application deadlines during the current fiscal year:

- October 23, 2023
- February 2, 2024

Upcoming Continuing Education Events:

October 2-6 is [Digital Inclusion Week](#) (DIW), and RAILS will offer two webinars to celebrate this week and highlight the ways libraries can support digital inclusion in their communities:

"Putting the "U" in Digital Equity" Webinar, October 3

Equity is at the very core of library services, but how can we apply the equity lens to digital services to include as many library patrons as possible? This webinar will address what digital equity is, how libraries can improve digital equity for patrons, and what staff need to become digital equity masters. Join Carson Block, technology consultant, and Sarah Morris, librarian and educational consultant, for this informative presentation. This webinar will be held on Tuesday, October 3, from 10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. [See more details and register on L2.](#)

"Collaborating for Digital Equity and Inclusion" Webinar, October 6

As digital access becomes increasingly essential for participating in community life, libraries can play an important role in the digital equity and inclusion ecosystem. This webinar will define digital divide, equity, and inclusion, and the relationship between them. Attendees will learn how to support digital equity in their communities through a variety of ways. Join Audrey Barbakoff, CEO Co/Lab Capacity LLC, as she shares her insights on this important topic. This webinar will be held on Friday, October 6, from 1:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m. [See more details and register on L2.](#)

"The Struggle Is Real: Library Services in Rural Schools" Webinar, October 4

In this presentation, participants will learn how school librarians can collaborate with classroom teachers to provide meaningful classroom lessons, meet the needs of Illinois HB234, resource sharing techniques that make the best use of limited library funding, and more. This webinar is Wednesday, October 4, 9:30-10:30 a.m. [Register via L2.](#)

No More Neutral: How to Champion the Right to Read" Webinar, October 4

The American Library Association reports a substantial and alarming increase in the number of book bans and challenges, beginning in 2021. These attacks cost money and lower morale and productivity among library staff. They also threaten the very existence of libraries as safe spaces. NovelList expert Angela Hursh will share tips to help libraries regain power by planning, positioning, and promoting with intention in this webinar on Wednesday, October 4, 1 – 2 p.m. [Register via L2.](#)

New RAILS Board Committee Members

The RAILS Board welcomes our new Resource Sharing and Universal Service Committee members! These individuals from our member libraries volunteered to use their experience and expertise to help shape system services and have an impact on all Illinois residents. Committee volunteers come from all sizes and types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special) and all levels of staff. [View the committee charges.](#)

Congratulations and thank you to our new committee members:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Joslyn Bowling Dixon, Oak Park Public Library
- Christy Coulter, Kewanee Life Skills & Re-Entry Center Library
- Renee Grassi, Lake Bluff Public Library
- Cindy Khatri, Downers Grove Public Library
- Mikayla Kitchen, East Moline Public Library
- Kristin Lansdown, DePaul University Library
- Lucas McKeever, Downers Grove Public Library

Resource Sharing

- Dr. Marlo Barnett, Calumet Public School District 132
- Amy Dodson, Fox River Valley Public Library District
- Travis Givens, Elmhurst University
- Laura Long, East Moline Public Library

Universal Service

- Angela Campbell, Rock Island Public Library
- Su Reynders, Mount Prospect Public Library
- Michelle Roubal, Joliet Junior College
- Brooke Sievers, Addison Public Library
- Alissa Williams, Morton Public Library District

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Joint Meeting with IHLS in Springfield on August 29

We had a great meeting in Springfield with our counterparts at the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS). We are also grateful to the Illinois State Library for hosting the event and participating in the day. Topics discussed included a tour of the Illinois State Library, an overview of both Systems' FY2024 operational plan, a discussion of statewide programs, one-on-one time for those in similar positions, and a discussion of opportunities for collaboration. We hope to plan a joint Board meeting for the two systems in April 2024 – more to come on that as it develops.

eRead 10th Anniversary Party at ILA Annual 2023: Save the Date!

We're celebrating the 10th anniversary of eRead Illinois Axis 360 at the ILA Conference in Springfield. Join RAILS and IHLS on **Tuesday, October 24 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.** at BOS Center's North Terrace for some drinks, food, and fun.

We'd love to hear your stories about how eRead Illinois has impacted your libraries. [Submit your testimonial](#) by Monday, October 16.

Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee Legislative Priorities

On August 28, the ILA Public Policy Committee met to discuss their recommendations for legislative priorities for FY2024. RAILS proposed a potential amendment to the requirement that libraries must acquire treasurer bonds at 50% of funds received by the library, instead requiring them to bond at only 25% or 10% in keeping with other forms of government in Illinois. This would create potential savings of up to \$324,000 a year for Illinois libraries. Other legislative proposals considered at this meeting included the Equitable Access to Electronic Literacy Materials Act, raising competitive bidding thresholds to \$30,000 or \$35,000, and a district tax cannabis proposal. The PPC group voted to move all four proposals to be considered by the ILA Executive Board at their September meeting.

I was also asked to attend the September 14 ILA Executive Board meeting to present on the amendment of Acquisition of Treasurer Bonds for Libraries in Illinois, and to answer any questions brought by the ILA Executive Board. After several presentations and rich discussion, the Executive Board voted to identify the Equitable Access to Electronic Materials Act, Acquisition of Treasurer Bonds for Libraries in Illinois, and the raising of the competitive bid threshold as legislative priorities for FY2024.

IMLS Project to Investigate Role Libraries Play in Community Safety and Well Being

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership Grants for Libraries awarded the Illinois Fire Service Institute Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign [a grant for \\$150,000](#) for an investigation into partnerships between libraries of all types and community emergency response partners during crises. This two-year project is named *Libraries as Partners for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Times of Crisis*. I will participate as a state project advisor.

This project will also serve as the conversation starter for future discussions, collaborations, and research on library-community partnerships. Watch for ways you and your library can participate in live information sessions and take a survey as one of the first steps in gathering information for this project. Project partners include the Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI), the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), and the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois (iSchool).

September Meeting with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL

RAILS has monthly meetings with representatives from the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) and the Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries.

September meeting topics included a discussion of the AISLE Standards Task Force and Illinois Standards Aligned Instruction for Libraries, an update on RAILS' school library data project now called SLATE (School Library Advocacy Through Education), materials challenges and developments with the launch of Unite Against Book Bans in Illinois, an update on Illinois legislation that affects libraries, the September 20 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, and upcoming annual conferences for AISLE and ILA. The next meeting of the group is October 10 at 4 p.m.

Unite Against Book Bans in Illinois

With censorship efforts surging at unprecedented levels across the country, staff and committee members from [ILA](#), [AISLE](#), [IHLS](#), [CARLI](#), and [RAILS](#) have launched the opportunity to create a network of regional response teams to support libraries and their staff. These [volunteer-led teams](#) will be available as a resource for libraries experiencing a challenge to library materials and may provide support in a variety of ways: letter writing to a governing body; attending board meetings; connecting with a library staff member experiencing a materials challenge for advice, consultation and/or moral support; or researching and providing specific information/resources around a particular challenged book or resource.

Work continues on the Regional Response Team project to support libraries across Illinois who experience a material challenge. We have received interest in volunteering from over 120 individuals and will continue to recruit more volunteers to serve on these teams from across the state. CARLI recently offered to support this project along with our

other statewide partners, and will assist in recruiting volunteers from across their academic library community. In the months ahead the project team will be working on resources and training for volunteers with the goal of launching this support service in early 2024.

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Staff Institute Day

Thank you to the Board for approving the October 11th closure for the RAILS Staff Insitute Day. We are looking forward to a day of learning from one another together for the first time since 2019!

Consortia Manager and Data Management

Jody Rubel completed the annual project of uploading FTE information for public libraries (IPLAR data) and school libraries (ISBE data) into Consortia Manager with assistance from Data Analysts Grant Halter and Janette Derucki. The annual upload is in preparation for upcoming renewals and new opt-in group purchasing subscriptions. On August 17, Leith Heath, Jody Rubel, Grant Halter, and Janette Derucki met with Consortia Manager staff in advance of the FTE upload to recommend improvements to streamline the process.

On August 21, Anna Behm, Jody Rubel, and Leila Heath met with Wes Smith to discuss changing the tools RAILS uses during the eRead Illinois renewal and sign-up process. Jody Rubel is leading the transition of sunsetting of an internal CRM software to a new platform for managing eRead Illinois subscriptions. The working team includes Anna Behm, Wayne Dixon, Leila Heath, Anne Slaughter, Brian Smith and Wes Smith. This prototype may also be adapted for other resource/product sign-up processes at RAILS.

Looking Ahead to October

- **October Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS Information Technology Manager Wes Smith will go over best practices for internet security.**

AUGUST 2023: analytics

● Facebook

● Instagram

● Twitter

● LinkedIn

followers



July 2023

August 2023

2,324

2,341

1,284

1,301

1,407

1,406

1,022

1,074

reach



July 2023

August 2023

6,940

10,276

1,993

1,998

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

impressions



July 2023

August 2023

N/A

N/A

8,059

8,354

8,201

6,887

5,010

2,781

engagement



July 2023

August 2023

2,201

2,882

341

547

N/A

N/A

265

158

AUGUST 2023: top posts

