



125 Tower Drive  
Burr Ridge, IL 60527  
630.734.5000  
railslibraries.org

## Executive Director Report, November 2023

### *Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing*

#### **Illinois Library Association Annual Conference**

We discussed briefly at our October meeting, but I want to reiterate what a great experience our RAILS team had at the ILA Annual Conference in Springfield from October 24-26. It was wonderful to see so many RAILS staff, Board members, and RAILS members presenting on many valuable topics. Our joint 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary eRead Illinois Party with our sister system, Illinois Heartland Library System, at ILA Annual was a big success and it was a great chance to celebrate the success of that program. RAILS Director of Technology Anne Slaughter and IHLS IT Director Troy Brown presented at the ILA President's Program on the importance of the upcoming funding opportunities related to broadband and digital equity. Finally, it was just great to see so many at the RAILS booth and throughout the conference! It was a wonderful opportunity to continue to work together after a few challenging years in libraries. After attendance at the AISLE and ILA conferences this October I am really inspired by the work happening in the Illinois library community and I'm looking forward to our next steps together.

#### **Public Act 103-0100**

The most recent ISLAC (Illinois State Library Advisory Committee) meeting on November 1 included discussion of the Secretary of State's proposed amendments related to [Public Act 103-0100](#) prohibiting book banning. A discussion of the comments received (comment period ended in October) revealed that there are few changes anticipated before the act becomes effective on January 1. Since one potential avenue for compliance with the act is for libraries and library systems to adopt the ALA Bill of Rights, we've prepared a resolution for the Board to consider that you will find in your packet. Looking forward to the discussion at the meeting.

#### **RAILS Minute**

The most recent [RAILS Minute](#) focused on several current topics, including our upcoming Member Update, a new EDI resource for RAILS members called Freedom Lifted, and the My Library Is... grant opportunity that is now available for all types of libraries. Thanks to Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist Ola Gronski and Marketing and Communications Director Dan Bostrom for all their continued work on this offering.

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

#### **Equity Analysis for the RAILS Personnel Manual**

Our EDI consultant Biz Lindsay-Ryan has completed her initial review of our personnel manual, with an eye to potential changes we may want to consider based on an equity lens. Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek, HR Manager Samantha Daly, and I met with Biz on October 12 and 31 to review her comments. There were many useful comments which we plan to incorporate into our forthcoming review of personnel policies with the RAILS Board Policy Committee.

## *Assist member libraries in preparing for the future*

### **RAILS Member Update on November 15**

Now that we have our new Marketing and Communications Director in place, we're looking forward to our first RAILS Member Update in some time! Please join us on Zoom on Wednesday, November 15 at 1pm for a series of updates relevant to RAILS members. Topics covered will include an overview of Freedom Lifted, Broadband in Illinois, updates on Public Act 103-100 and statewide online resources from the Illinois State Library, and new My Library Is... grant opportunities. We hope to be able to offer member updates more frequently moving forward.

### **RSA (Resource Sharing Alliance) Independence Project**

Work towards independence from RAILS for RSA has been in progress since at least 2019, but as we enter a new phase of that active development we wanted to offer the RAILS Board an update about how those efforts are moving along. Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek and I met on November 2 with RSA Executive Director Kendal Orrison, RSA Board President Alissa Williams, and Amanda Standerfer of Standerfer Consulting to discuss a communication plan for the next steps of the project. We came up with some great next steps for our shared communications plan. We will discuss the project in more detail at the November RAILS Board meeting.

### **Library Journal Directors Summit and Pre-Conference on Library Safety and Security**

As I write this, I am currently attending the Library Journal Directors Summit in Houston, Texas (November 8-10). I elected to attend the preconference on Library Safety and Security to make connections with library leaders and experts on best practice around safety in our libraries after the efforts around responding to a series of bomb threats in RAILS member libraries this summer. I've also heard many interesting strategies for addressing materials challenges from library leaders in states that have significant legislative challenges around materials, programs, and services. It is a truly inspiring group and I've learned a lot in my time here. I am grateful to the RAILS Board for the opportunity to attend and the staff who are keeping things moving forward at RAILS in my absence from the office.

## *Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community*

### **Joint Board meeting with Illinois Heartland Library System**

We are meeting with administrative staff from Illinois Heartland Library System later this month to discuss planning for a joint Board meeting for RAILS and IHLS in late Spring 2024. It has been about a decade since the last joint Board meeting, and many RAILS Board members over the years have suggested their hopes to meet together again to discuss shared goals and challenges that we can work on together. I am very interested in your comments about what topics you would be interested in covering with the IHLS Board as we plan for this meeting. More details are forthcoming as our planning comes together.

### **Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC)**

The ISLAC Committee met for the first time since May 2023 on November 1. I attended the meeting virtually as a guest. Topics discussed included the selection of a Chair and Vice Chair (Dave Barry and Stacey Carter, respectively), the Secretary of State's budget, Broadband, the License to Read Act, statewide databases for libraries, open educational resources (OER), and a draft document for certification that details how libraries will respond to their obligations under Public Act 103-100, and future agenda building. Greg McCormick will join us at the November meeting to share more information about some of these items. Towards the end of the meeting, Greg McCormick mentioned that the Secretary's office is finalizing their process for appointing members of the committee and they hope to have an update regarding that soon.

### **Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee (PPC)**

The ILA PPC committee met on Monday, November 6. Many updates to the current [legislative priorities](#) were discussed. A bill has already been filed related to the treasurer bond reduction from 50% to 10% or operating budget, which was a proposal introduced this year by RAILS. An increase in the current (\$25,000) competitive bidding threshold is also being proposed. There was an additional discussion about bringing the Local Records Act discussion to the Secretary of State's office rather than pursue it as a legislative change. A recent change was made to the regular PPC agenda where ex officio organizations (including RAILS) offer a brief update of their organizations at each meeting.

### **Illinois Library Association Legislative Meetups**

ILA is hosting seven in person [legislative meetups](#) in late November and early December. This is the first time these events have been in person since 2020. RAILS staff members will attend all events covering RAILS member territory from November 29 through December 6. We encourage RAILS Board members to attend one of these events. **Please note that registration closes on November 24 and no in site registration will be available.**

## *Looking Ahead to January*

- **January Service of the Month and Board Development topics – Anna Behm will present on eRead Illinois Boundless and Barb Miller provide a Find More Illinois update**

## *FY 2023-24 RAILS Committees*

---

- **Highlight indicates a change**

### **Executive Committee -**

- Alex Vancina, Chair and President
- Gwen Gregory, Vice President
- Julie Milavec, Secretary
- Karen Voitik, Treasurer
- Rene Leyva, At Large Member

### **Advocacy Committee**

- **Monica Caldicott, Chair, School**
- Alice Creason, RAILS Board, Trustee
- Jean Carroll, RAILS Board, Trustee
- Catherine Yanikoski, RAILS Board, Special
- Representatives from Member Libraries

### **Consortia Committee**

- Thomas Stagg, Chair
- Rene Leyva, RAILS Board
- Representatives: CARLI, CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RRLC, RSA, SWAN

### **EDI Committee**

- Dianne Hollister, Chair, RAILS Board
- Rosie Camargo, RAILS Board
- Vanessa Villarreal, RAILS Board
- Representatives from Member Libraries

### **Nominating Committee**

- Thomas Stagg, Chair
- The Board President will appoint members to this committee in January.

### **Policy Committee**

- Gwen Gregory, Chair and Vice President
- Alice Creason
- **Catherine Yanikoski**
- Jennifer Hovanec
- Tom Stagg

### **Resource Sharing Committee**

- Becky Spratford, Chair
- Dianne Hollister, RAILS Board
- Julie Milavec, RAILS Board
- Representatives from Member Libraries

### **Universal Service Committee**

- Alice Creason, Chair-RAILS Board
- Lynn Stainbrook, Rockford Public Library
- Catherine Yanikoski, RAILS Board
- Representatives from Member Libraries
- Greg McCormick-ISL ex-officio

- **Ethics Officer:** Rene Leyva
- **FOIA Officer:** Alex Vancina
- **OMA Officer:** Rene Leyva



## This Month at RAILS – November 2023

### THE TOP THREE

In response to board member feedback, each month we provide brief talking points to help you spread the word about specific RAILS programs/services. Here are this month's top three:

#### **Freedom Lifted**

Beginning November 15, staff at any RAILS member library will be able to sign-up for access to the asynchronous online course "Social Justice for Public Libraries" through [Freedom Lifted](#). This course will feature content in a variety of formats that will focus on topics of identity, power, oppression and solidarity. More information, including instructions on how to access this course, can be found on the [RAILS website at the Freedom Lifted page](#).

#### **My Library Is... Grants Now Open for Application**

RAILS is excited to announce the opening of applications for the 2024 My Library Is... Grants. These grants are designed to help libraries tell their story. In 2024, these grants are now open to all types of libraries, including – academic, public, school, and special libraries. Libraries can apply for up to \$5,000. Applications are due Wednesday, February 7, 2024. Learn more at the [My Library Is... Grant page](#).

#### **New! RAILS Discount for Era Books Online**

RAILS members are eligible for advantageous pricing for *Era Books Online*, which provides children with an extensive range of books, games and activities to improve their English (US) reading, writing and comprehension skills. Libraries can elevate their phonics, literacy and literature collections with curated content by trusted educators, that is supported by early childhood research. Accessible by web Apps for modern browsers and mobile Apps for iOS and Android, Era Books Online makes learning convenient, engaging and fun! For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, members can visit the [Era Books Online Package Deals & Discounts page](#).

## *Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing*

### Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

#### **RAILS Member Engagement at ILA and AISLE Conferences**

RAILS had approximately 347 visitors to our exhibit booth at the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Conference on October 25 and 26. Thanks to all the RAILS Board members who helped out and stopped by!

We had approximately 114 visitors to our booth at the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Conference on October 3 and 4.

#### **October RAILS Member Library Visits**

RAILS Engagement Manager Dan Bostrom visited two of our member libraries in October.

On October 19, Dan visited two schools in the Rich Township High School District #227, the STEM Campus in Olympia Fields and the Fine Arts and Communications Campus in Richton Park.

#### **RAILS Social Media Engagement**

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

### Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

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

#### **New! RAILS Discount for Era Books Online**

RAILS members are eligible for advantageous pricing for ***Era Books Online***, which provides children with an extensive range of books, games and activities to improve their English (US) reading, writing and comprehension skills. Libraries can elevate their phonics, literacy and literature collections with curated content by trusted educators, that is supported by early childhood research. Accessible by web Apps for modern browsers and mobile Apps for iOS and Android, Era Books Online makes learning convenient, engaging and fun! For more information, pricing or to schedule a demo, members can visit the Era Books Online Package Deals & Discounts page.

#### **Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos**

In October, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel organized and hosted two readers' advisory resource webinars for 15 attendees. A recording of the webinar is available on the Deals & Discounts page. The promotion resulted in two new library sign ups that resulted in \$548 total savings.

Jody Rubel continues to receive quote requests and new signups for the movie performance rights licenses and digital newspapers and magazines offers. More than 33% of the currently subscribing libraries have renewed their movie performance rights licenses. The group purchase sign-up and renewal period ends on November 30.

While at the ILA Conference October 24-26 in Springfield, IL both Jody Rubel and Leila Health met vendors to discuss and strengthen the Deals & Discounts offers to our members, and to explore potential opportunities. Two of our vendor partners were first time exhibitors at the conference.

### **ConsortiaManager & Data Management**

On October 17, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Jody Rubel attended the Consortia Manager user group meeting to learn more about recent enhancements and development roadmap. About 60 consortia now subscribe to ConsortiaManager, both in the US and internationally.

Leila Heath and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at CARLI, met on October 19 to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing.

On November 2, Anna Behm, Jody Rubel, and Leila Heath met with Karen Goyer and Wayne Dixon to discuss details and progress for the new software platform for managing eRead Illinois subscriptions.

### **Career Online High School Update**

[Career Online High School](#) is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program.

### **COHS Stats as of October 31, 2023**

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
416	178	122	60%/53%

## **Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services**

### **Delivery Vehicle Update**

On August 22, 2023, RAILS was able to order two Ford F350 box trucks with a 12' box from Landmark Ford via the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS).

On October 27, 2023, RAILS successfully ordered seven 2024 Ford Transit vehicles at a cost of \$54,246 each. We will share more details about the arrival timeline of those vehicles when that becomes available. We are also looking to order more Ford F450/550 box trucks as well.

The total for the nine vehicles ordered amounts to \$502,250.00. The total amount budgeted for vehicles this fiscal year was \$750,000.00 therefore leaving adequate room to purchase the additional vehicles required.

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

### **Catalog Membership Grant**

Applications for the Catalog Membership Grant have been received from three libraries joining shared catalog consortia. Awards will be announced later in November.

## FY 2025 LLSAP Support Grants

Awards for the FY 2025 LLSAP Support Grants have been announced to the six shared catalog consortia, or Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs) within RAILS. This annual grant distributes \$2.25 million of funding to support the operations of CCS, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA, SWAN, and Pinnacle Library consortium and their considerable contributions to resource sharing across the RAILS service area.

## Find More Illinois Update

Find More Illinois was part of the conversation at the 2023 ILA Annual Conference. Participating panelists in “Expanding Library Service Across Illinois with Resource Sharing” included RAILS staff, librarians from Find More Illinois libraries, and a member of RAILS’ Board of Directors. Some of the topics discussed included ways to share resources, the benefits of sharing resources, and how to support small libraries by sharing resources.



## eRead Illinois Update



Anna Behm continued to field questions from eRead Illinois member libraries about the transition in late September from Axis 360 to Boundless, as well as how to access support resources. She has also received several compliments on how smoothly the rollout went.

Anna Behm and Curt Leppert from Baker & Taylor met with staff from School District U-46 to discuss some of the recent changes to the eRead Illinois program and the switch to Boundless.

Anna Behm, Joe Filapek and Leila Heath met with Jack Darden and Anna Curtis from Baker & Taylor on October 18. Jack is RAILS’s new sales representative. They discussed the Boundless roll out as well as current projects and initiatives.

RAILS’s Baker & Taylor Customer Success Manager, Anna Curtis announced she has accepted a new position at B&T and will no longer manage eRead Illinois. Jesse Wilson will take over the role at the end of November.

## Use of RAILS E-Resources

### eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
October 2023	21,814	17,299	39,113
FY 2024	75,212	64,756	139,968

### Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
October 2023	1,395



FY 2024	6,205
---------	-------

### Explore More Illinois Update

[Explore More Illinois](#) is RAILS' statewide online cultural and recreational pass program.



In October 2023, 1,465 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in September were Brookfield Zoo (315), Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200), Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie (21), DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (15), and Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (11). The most popular Chicago attractions in July were the Art Institute of Chicago (225), Field Museum (167), Museum of Science and Industry (158), Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (154), and Chicago Children's Museum (67).

November 1 starts the last Explore More Illinois enrollment period of 2023. Libraries can submit their information to join through December 15.

The David Davis Mansion State Historical Site in Bloomington joined Explore More Illinois in October.

### Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
333	88	1	4	426

### Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

Attractions	64
Total Attractions in 2023	76

### Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois as of October 31, 2023

RAILS/IHLS	176
CPL	1,291
Total	1,465

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

### Freedom Lifted

Beginning November 15, staff at any RAILS member library will be able to sign-up for access to the asynchronous online course "Social Justice for Public Libraries" through Freedom Lifted. This course will

feature content in a variety of formats that will focus on topics of identity, power, oppression and solidarity. More information, including instructions on how to access this course, can be [found on the RAILS website](#).

## *Assist member libraries in preparing for the future*

### Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value

#### **RAILS Opens Applications for My Library Is... Grants**

RAILS is excited to announce the opening of applications for the [2024 My Library Is... Grants](#).

These grants are designed to help libraries tell their story. In 2024, these grants are now open to all types of libraries, including – academic, public, school, and special libraries. All RAILS libraries are invited to apply. Libraries may apply for up to \$5,000. Applications are due Wednesday, February 7, 2024.



### Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

#### **RAILS at the 2023 ILA Annual Conference**

RAILS 21 RAILS employees attended the 2023 ILA Annual Conference. There were many highlights and many opportunities for staff to interact with member libraries. There were presentations by six RAILS employees:

- Advocating for Great Illinois School Libraries (Dan Bostrom, Janette Derucki)
- Cultivating Belonging: How We Moved EDI Initiatives from Training to Action (Sam Daly)
- Expanding Library Service Across Illinois with Resource Sharing (Barb Miller, Anne Slaughter)
- Growing with Cataloging Training (Nincy George)
- Surprise! You Are a Cataloger: Free Cataloging Resources and Tips to Help You Catalog Materials (Nincy George)

At the Membership Meeting in Springfield, RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter announced a collaboration between RAILS, IHLS, and CARLI to advocate for and support libraries in the deployment of state and federal funding for broadband expansion and digital equity programs. The newly launched [BroadbandForLibraries.com](#) site shares a collaborative open letter submitted as public comment to the Illinois Office of Broadband and includes additional resources to help libraries engage with this work and prepare for the release of the state's Digital Equity Plan in January. Anne's work to inform and connect the Illinois library community and broadband decisionmakers continued via a meeting with Illinois Broadband Lab staff, participation in the Libraries Working Group of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, and presentations at the RAILS Member Update, CARLI Annual Meeting, and Illinois State Library Advisory Committee meeting.



There was also a strong presence from the RAILS Board of Directors. Thank you to all of the RAILS Board Directors who presented, volunteered, and participated in the conference. The following RAILS Board Directors presented at the conference:

- Beyond the Stacks: Broadening Outreach Services Outside the Library Walls (Jennifer Hovanec)
- Cultivate Belonging: How We Moved EDI Initiatives from Training to Action (Rene Leyva)
- Expanding Library Service Across Illinois with Resource Sharing (Rene Leyva)
- Getting the Interview, Getting the Job: Advice from Hiring Managers (Julie Milavec)
- Spilling the Tea on Drag Events at Libraries (Jennifer Hovanec)



The eRead Illinois 10 Year Anniversary Party, held at the ILA Conference on October 24, was attended by about 300 people celebrating the success of the statewide program. The event was hosted by RAILS and IHLS and open to all conference attendees. Anna Behm gave a brief overview of the statewide program and Leslie Bednar, Monica Harris, and Jim Smith, Baker & Taylor's Executive/Senior VP of Sales gave short speeches. Sponsors of the event included Baker & Taylor, Quipu and The New York Times.

### **RAILS Awards Continuing Education Event (CE) Grants**

RAILS periodically offers training grants of up to \$2,000 for libraries, networking groups, or consortia to support CE for member library staff throughout our service area. RAILS awarded the following organizations during our Fall 2023 grant period:

- [LACONI SAAM](#) and [Recharge Committee: Networking Unconference](#)
- [ATLAS Multilibrary Day](#)
- [RSA Day 2024](#)

RAILS members will have one more grant period open for those interested in applying for a CE Event Grant during the current fiscal year. The deadline for those grant applications is February 2, 2024. More information can be [found on the RAILS website](#).

### **Upcoming RAILS CE Highlights**

RAILS will offer [“Resilience: This Moment and Beyond”](#) webinar on December 5. This interactive and experiential learning experience will teach you how to author your own resilience, using Right To Be's resilience methodology: sit with what is, create your story, and be in choice. Starting with a discussion on resilience and how it's different (and harder) than self-care, you'll then be guided on how to hold pain and still find joy through guided practices.

RAILS will offer “Customer Service in Libraries Presented by Martina Mathisen” webinar on December 11. Details for this event will be published in L2 soon.

### **ALA Core Forum in New Orleans**

Anne Slaughter serves as Vice Chair of the Technology Section Leadership Team of the American Library Association's Core division, and attended the annual Core Forum conference in New Orleans in October.

### **ELSUM Networking Group Meeting**

Anna Behm, Leila Heath and Jody Rubel attended the ELSUM Networking Meeting on October 18, which discusses topics related to e-resources, including usage, promotion opportunities and purchasing. Leila spoke briefly about RAILS deals.

### **eRead Illinois 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party**

Anna Behm, Leila Heath and the RAILS Marketing team met with staff from IHLS on October 19 to finalize details for the eRead Illinois 10-year anniversary event the systems co-hosted at the ILA annual conference.

*Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community*

### **Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations**

#### **November 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), and the Illinois State Library (ISL) to discuss ways we can work collaboratively to support school libraries.

November meeting topics included an update on RAILS' school library data project, materials challenges, updates about Public Act 100-recent library legislation, and more.

### ***RAILS Staff & Service Center News***

#### **Burr Ridge Office Changes**

To accommodate the upcoming addition of a new Human Resources Assistant, HR Manager Sam Daly has moved to the office previously occupied by Marketing and Communication Director Dan Bostrom. We anticipate having a new Human Resources Assistant in place by early December.

#### **Changes to Video Equipment at RAILS Locations**

RAILS IT has completed their replacement of Polycom equipment at RAILS locations with Zoom Room hardware and software.

# OCTOBER 2023: analytics

● Facebook

● Instagram

● Twitter

● LinkedIn

## followers



September 2023

October 2023

2,371

2,381

1,323

1,336

1,408

1,419

1,132

1,136

## reach



September 2023

October 2023

8,933

5,430

1,967

1,442

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

## impressions



September 2023

October 2023

N/A

N/A

6,820

8,060

4,886

3,310

3,045

3,659

## engagement



September 2023

October 2023

1,898

2,235

413

521

N/A

N/A

120

116

# OCTOBER 2023: top posts

