

RAILS Report – Consortia Committee

Catalog Membership Grant

Three libraries received Catalog Membership Grant awards in late 2023:

- Mount Prospect Public Library - \$73,800.00 to join CCS
- Waukegan Public Library - \$52,050.00 to join CCS
- Winnebago Public Library - \$14,962.15 to join PrairieCat

The final grant application deadline for FY2024 is April 15, 2024. We are beginning our budget development process for FY2025 and will contact LLSAP Directors in the coming weeks to inquire about possible costs for any potential incoming new members to help inform our budget decisions. RAILS attempts to budget as generously as possible for this grant program, within our strategic priorities and available funding.

RAILS Burr Ridge Office Temporarily Closed for Outside Groups

The RAILS Burr Ridge office will be closed to all outside groups starting Tuesday, January 30, 2024 as we begin a project to replace all network cabling in the building. This project is expected to take 2-3 weeks to complete, with a tentative end date of Tuesday, February 20. RAILS staff will work from home as much as possible during this time, though we may need to open the facility for RAILS Board Committee meetings. This work will not impact any other RAILS service center, delivery services, websites, or any web-based services (like eRead Illinois, Find More Illinois, or Explore More Illinois). RAILS employees based out of Burr Ridge will be available via phone and email during regular business hours, and we will continue to receive regular mail delivery at Burr Ridge.

Inclement Weather Reminders

With winter weather arriving this month, a reminder that a special alert will be posted on the RAILS homepage as soon as possible if we close any of our five facilities due to bad weather conditions. If a RAILS building is open, the Delivery Manager at each RAILS location will decide if any routes at their location will be canceled due to weather conditions. We also offer a place for member libraries to report emergency and other irregular closings (e.g. snowstorm, power outage, etc.) at <https://railslibraries.org/libraries/closings>.

Library Review of System Delivery Contacts

RAILS is reminding all library directors to review the list of library staff designated as a System Delivery Contact to ensure they receive notices and reminders for each required quarterly delivery count. This email list is used to notify members of any changes to libraries' delivery service, including delays due to weather, route changes, cancellations, etc. If you are also asking your members to update information

you have on file with them, we'd appreciate you mentioning this as well if possible. More information at <https://railslibraries.org/news/108617>.

Staff Vacancies Filled

RAILS has recently welcomed Dan Bostrom (via internal promotion) as our new Director of Marketing and Communications, and Kate Niehoff as our new Director of Consulting and Continuing Education, resulting in a fully staffed Executive Team for the first time since Deirdre Brennan's retirement in November 2022. The process of filling the vacant Member Engagement Manager position will begin shortly.

Find More Illinois Updates

The incentive program that covered all setup costs for incoming Find More Illinois libraries has ended. The program had a significant impact on participation, helping it grow from 32 to 95 libraries. This includes all 30 CCS libraries that have recently decided to join as a consortium. The Find More Illinois team will be spending the first half of 2024 focused on the CCS onboarding process. We are also in the process of evaluating the post-pilot growth phase of the service and developing a nuanced expansion plan moving forward. Barb Miller will present more details at the January 26 RAILS Board meeting.

"Social Justice for Public Libraries" Course

Staff at any RAILS member library are able to sign up for access to the asynchronous online course "Social Justice for Public Libraries" from Freedom Lifted using their L2 login credentials. This course features content in a variety of formats focusing on topics of identity, power, oppression, and solidarity. Course content is relevant and applicable to all library types, and we are happy to extend access to consortium staff as well. More information, including instructions on how to access the course, can be found at <https://railslibraries.org/education/freedom-lifted>.

Broadband Expansion and Digital Equity

At the Illinois Library Association annual conference in October 2023, 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. Libraries and consortia have a critical role in advancing digital equity, and need to be able to benefit from capacity-building resources. We know that the issues caused by inadequate connectivity at some libraries have included dropped connections to their consortial catalog software. The newly launched www.BroadbandForLibraries.com site shares resources to help libraries engage with this work and participate in opportunities for public comment and other activities. We are currently encouraging active participation in the BEAD challenge process, which will help ensure that libraries lacking adequate broadband access are accurately represented on the map that will help determine which broadband expansion projects are funded, and the Digital Equity Plan public comment period open through January 31, which is an opportunity for stakeholder organizations and individual residents to give feedback on the state's strategic approaches to broadband expansion and digital equity programming. Additional information can be found at <https://dceo.illinois.gov/connectillinois/federal-broadband.html>.

2024 Illinois State Library Annual Certification

Annual library certification is underway through March 31, 2024. Annual certification is required of all library system members to retain system membership and eligibility for grants administered by the Illinois State Library. Completing the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan & Reciprocal Borrowing Statistical Survey is a prerequisite for certification. Libraries needing assistance can contact the L2 help desk via the form at <https://librarylearning.org/help> and select Annual Certification as the category. As in previous years, RAILS staff will contact individual libraries closer to the end of the process if they haven't certified, and may reach out to consortium directors for assistance in reaching their respective members.

RAILS Minute

A reminder that our RAILS Minute video series provides regular bite-sized summaries of RAILS' current key issues and projects and is a useful supplement to our weekly enews. Videos are posted to our YouTube account and shared to the RAILS website. If you have any feedback or questions you want to see discussed in 2024, let us know at communications@railslibraries.org.