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## Executive Director Report, March 2024

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

#### Visit to the Evanston Public Library

Thank you to Evanston Public Library Executive Director and RAILS Board Member Yolande Wilburn for the opportunity to tour the Main Library and to hear more about her exciting plans for Evanston.

#### Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the most recent Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee meeting on March 4th. Lobbyist Derek Blaida highlighted important deadlines for the state legislature, noting the expectation that there will not be much movement through the March 19<sup>th</sup> primary and that things will pick up significantly after the Easter holiday.

Blaida also highlighted additional bills for the committee that ILA is watching closely:

- [HB4224](#): Seeks parity between libraries and other governmental units to require library treasurers to hold a bond of 10% of total revenue collection (as opposed to the current level of 50%). Has been assigned to revenue – property tax subcommittee and has three co-sponsors.
- [HB4258](#): Amends the License to Read Act to include provisions regulating contracts between libraries and publishers, including the provision that no contract will restrict libraries from operational functions, restrict disclosure of the terms of its license to other libraries, or enable violation of the Library Records Confidentiality Act. This bill has been referred to the State Government Administration Committee and has two co-sponsors.
- [HB4567](#): Amends the criminal code to include library employees as protected in relation to threats and disorderly conduct. Has been referred to Judiciary Criminal Committee and has ten co-sponsors. This bill was sponsored by Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias as an additional support for libraries facing threats and other conduct challenges.
- [SB173](#): Amends Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act. Provides an employer who engages in electronic monitoring to give notice to employees. Has been Re-assigned to Judiciary. One amendment has been proposed.
- [SB2787](#): Amends the Illinois Local Library Act and the Public Library District Act of 1991. Requires competitive bidding for contracts in excess of \$35,000 (rather than \$25,000) for specified improvements and equipment purchases. Was postponed after being assigned to Local Government. This bill has three co-sponsors.
- [HB2401](#): Reintroduced from last legislative session. Amends the school code and requires that books included in any course include diverse authors. Includes school board level control of reading material. Has been assigned to the elementary and Secondary Education School Curriculum and Policies committee. Two amendments have been proposed to this bill.

ILA has published a list of the bills they are [monitoring](#) if you have an interest in following these changes. RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek will attend a meeting on March 26 with ILA PPC and Blaida to go through the current bill list in more detail.

### **FY2025 System Area and Per Capita Grant**

We received instructions from the Illinois State Library for the FY2025 System Area and Per Capita Grant application. The Secretary of State's budget request for FY2025 would fund RAILS operations and services at an estimated \$11,870,000. We are at work on creating our FY2025 budget and operational plan and will share a draft of the operational plan with the Board at the April meeting.

### **Delivery Count Conversations with Consortia Committee**

We have begun early discussions with our Consortia committee about the possibilities around the reports they can generate from their various Integrated Library System (ILS) and whether we can feasibly explore the option of reporting that could take the place of the Delivery Count. This is a complex process as each ILS has different reporting structures, not all material that moves through delivery is accounted for by reporting, etc. Anne Slaughter, Mark Hatch, Joe Filapek, Grant Halter, and myself are beginning to work together on the RAILS side to create a detailed list of all types of material that moves through Delivery and then determine the general frequency of each type. We've received some sample reports from RAILS LLSAPs and we hope to continue the discussion at the next Consortia meeting in April.

### **RAILS Minute**

In March, the RAILS Minute highlighted the SLATE Data Dashboard launch, Freedom Lifted and the accompanying survey for member feedback, and an Illinois legislative update. The RAILS Minute is available in video and audio podcast format. 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***

### **Climate Team**

The RAILS internal Climate Team is a group of staff across departments focused on ways to make RAILS a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organization. The group has focused on several topics as of late including staff training models, onboarding, and the hiring process. They have established the need for the development of a video that can shared with new staff during onboarding the focuses on RAILS ongoing commitment to and values around EDI. We hope to have the video developed and ready to share in FY2025.

### **EDI Training for RAILS Staff**

RAILS is offering two opportunities for all staff to continue their EDI learning with a two-hour training session led by RAILS' EDI Consultant, Elisabeth 'Biz' Lindsay-Ryan. These sessions, to be held on May 9 and May 16, will offer a review of previous training led by Biz and take them through the next step of considering what actions they need to take in their roles at RAILS. In addition, all RAILS supervisors will take part in managerial training led by Biz that will help them consider their role as leaders and what part they play in operationalizing EDI at RAILS.

### **EDI Training for RAILS Member Library Trustees**

RAILS' EDI Consultant, Elisabeth 'Biz' Lindsay-Ryan, will present a three-hour workshop for RAILS member library trustees on April 26 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. This session will include a general overview of current trends and research about handling diversity topics, particularly race, gender, ability, and family structure, and how library board members' perspectives may impact their communities.

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

### **Support for School Libraries on Public Act 103-0100**

As we have discussed, [Public Act 103-0100](#) became effective on January 1. We are increasingly hearing from school member libraries with questions about how they can be compliant with the new law. We discussed potential avenues for information sharing with the Partnership (AISLE, ILA, IHLS) and are currently in the process of collecting Frequently Asked Questions about the law so that we can create documentation that will be shared by our organizations. Hopefully more on this next month.

### **RSA Independence Project**

RSA Executive Director Kendal Orrison and the RSA team are continuing to move forward on their progress towards independence. The [RSA Independence Project](#) webpage was updated with a great deal of documentation for RSA members on March 1. Included is a memo about RAILS Support of RSA and the RSA Independence Project and a breakdown of the differences between RAILS and RSA to help members understand the history of the project and their services moving forward.

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

### **Statement of Economic Interests**

If you served on the RAILS Board in 2023, you should have received your invitation to complete a Statement of Economic Interests from Cook County. If you have not received one, please let Emily Fister know asap. After you complete the process, please forward your confirmation email from Cook County to Emily. RAILS must submit copies to the Illinois State Library with our SAPC grant application.

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

After a great deal of discussion and planning between our teams, the IHLS Board is unable to commit to the April 30 date in Bloomington. We will be meeting again on March 19 to discuss potential fall dates to meet in Bloomington. Thank you all for your prompt responses on this matter, and we look forward to having more details to share about new dates soon.

### **Meetings with the Illinois State Library**

I continue to meet regularly with the Greg McCormick, Director of the Illinois State Library. We discussed an innovative approach to serving an unserved area between Rosemont and Des Plaines. The Illinois State Library is actively in the process of hiring for open positions. We also discussed the possibility of federal funds for library capital projects available via congressional representatives. Greg McCormick also noted that the opportunity for an official ISLAC appointment for RAILS may be coming soon.

## *Looking Ahead to April*

- **April Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS discounts and group purchases, Consortia Manager, and digital marketing efforts**



## This Month at RAILS – March 2024

### 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:

#### **RAILS Awards Five Continuing Education Grants**

RAILS awarded Continuing Education event grants to each of these organizations:

- **BIPOC Library Networkers Group:** “Navigating White Spaces as a BIPOC Library Worker”, presented by Tracie D. Hall
- **College of DuPage Library and DePaul University Library:** Illinois Information Literacy Summit
- **Geneseo Public Library:** “Keep Cool Under Pressure”, presented by Martina Mathisen
- **Stickney-Forest View Public Library District:** “Actively Anti-Racist Service to Readers”, presented by Becky Spratford
- **Washington District Library:** “Adapting Your Library to Changing Community Needs”, presented by Ashley Stewart, EveryLibrary Campaign Strategist

More information and registration details will be available on the L2 calendar in the coming weeks.

#### **iLEAD Trustee Learning Portal Workshops**

iLEAD, the new learning portal for public library trustees, has launched and is hosting free two-hour workshops at locations around the state. Public library directors and trustees are invited to join iLEAD representatives to learn more about how board members can tap into the self-paced courses of the iLEAD learning portal.



There are a number of [online and in-person workshops](#) open for registration. These events are free and open to all Illinois public library trustees and directors.

#### **Transition to New RAILS Rockford Delivery Hub**

The transition to our new Rockford delivery hub will take place on Monday, March 25, with routes beginning the day at our current facility at 4607 Colt Road in Rockford and returning to our new facility at 4717 Colt Road. Staff are currently working through a 44-point relocation checklist to ensure a smooth transition. In addition to its close proximity to our existing space, this new facility will offer several advantages including indoor parking for RAILS vehicles, increased square footage, and newer HVAC equipment. In the weeks ahead RAILS will coordinate a few necessary upgrades to this new facility including the installation of security cameras and alarm system, enhanced interior and exterior lighting, and upgraded data ports.

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

### Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

#### **New Broadband Pulse Page**

In our continuing efforts to ensure that libraries are aware of broadband expansion and digital equity issues and funding, the Communications Team published a [Broadband Pulse](#) page on the RAILS website.

#### **Using the SLATE Data Dashboard, 3/20**

On Wednesday, March 20, 3:30–5:00 p.m., RAILS Data Specialist Janette Derucki will offer for an online information session covering the School Library Advocacy through Education (SLATE) project and a demonstration of the new data dashboard. Any staff from any library in Illinois is invited to attend. Registration is now open via L2.

#### **Improvements to L2 and New L2 Registration Video**

L2 has received a set of improvements to the visual display of the calendar that were based on user feedback and have been well received. RAILS Applications & Web Developer Brian Smith also created [a video with instructions](#) on setting up a new account.

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

See the report at the end for info on our January 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 Gale: Excel Adult High School**

RAILS is pleased to announce a new partnership with the award-winning Gale: Excel Adult High School program. This online, accredited high school diploma program provides students with ELL support, Read Aloud, tutoring, Success Coaches and more. More information about the program, including pricing, can be found on the RAILS Deals and Discounts webpage.

#### **New RAILS Vendor Partnership Page**

A new [Deals & Discounts: Information for Vendors page](#) was added to the RAILS website in February. The page summarizes the advantages and expectations of a vendor partnership with RAILS.

#### **July 1 Group Subscription Renewals**

In February, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel opened renewal periods for some of the group purchase subscriptions with July 1 start dates, including the Find More Illinois renewal. Library staff continue to contact Jody Rubel regarding subscriptions to digital newspapers and magazines, movie performance rights, and world language storytelling books.

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

RAILS hosted a webinar on February 22 for a reading program management resource. The webinar drew 6 registrants who were engaged with questions about the features, rewards, and ILS integration. The webinar recording is posted on the RAILS Deals & Discounts page.

### **ConsortiaManager & Data Management**

RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at CARLI, met on February 20 to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing.

Anna Behm, Leila Heath, Karen Goyer and Jody Rubel met with Wayne Dixon, Grant Halter, Janette Derucki, and Brian Smith to strengthen L2 data points procedures. The L2 data points are a critical part of the group purchasing renewal and join processes.

Anna Behm, Leila Heath, and Jody Rubel met with Barb Millier to discuss the eRead Illinois fee change project and how it might relate to Find More Illinois's fee structure.

The eRead Illinois join/renewal dashboard went live on February 12. Member testing of the dashboard and renewal forms began on February 15 for select libraries. This testing allowed RAILS to identify and correct any issues or bugs before the renewal period begins on March 18. Jody Rubel met with finance staff Kim Perry and Deb Mitchener to give an overview of the new eRead Illinois dashboard.

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

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

Jessica Barnes and Leila Heath sent invitations to all participating Career Online High School libraries to go over pricing changes starting July 1 and to discuss future plans for the program at their libraries. They met with Kristen Newcomb from Berwyn Public Library on February 8 and Zach Terrill from McHenry Public Library on February 22.

In February, RAILS secured a discount for Gale: Excel Adult High School for member libraries. Details can be found on the RAILS Deals and Discounts webpage. Libraries have the option of participating in Career Online High School, Gale: Excel Adult High School, or both programs concurrently. Currently, three Illinois libraries use Gale Excel Adult High School (one library runs both programs concurrently).

### **COHS Stats as of February 29, 2024**

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
427	198	92	60%/53%

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

### **Update on RSA Independence Project**

RSA has finalized all its Independence Documentation, the new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), Bylaws, and Fee Structure for FY29, as well as the fee structure phase-in period. All that paperwork has been sent to

the membership. Now members review and sign the IGA to remain in RSA after 1 July 2024. This is the culmination of about 5 years of work.

### Find More Illinois Update

Find More Illinois is moving forward with onboarding the many libraries that joined in the last weeks of December. Over thirty libraries joined FMI in the final weeks of the incentive program where RAILS waived the one-time set up fees for FMI participants. We are working toward testing connectivity with Cooperative Computer Service (CCS) libraries, and Farmington Area Library District and Lake Park High School District #108 are preparing for training.



### eRead Illinois Update

Anna Behm, Leila Heath, Monica Harris, and Joe Filapek met with Quinn McKissock and Grant Halter to discuss the eRead Illinois data project. They discussed the current status of the project as well as potential outcomes and applications.

RAILS reached out to RSA about renewing their consortium-wide participation in eRead Illinois. We are working with them to coordinate their renewal as they navigate the RSA independence project.

Anna Behm continues to work with the team at Baker & Taylor to discuss ordering maximizing ordering efficiencies for the eRead Illinois collection.

### Use of RAILS E-Resources

#### eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
February 2024	20,736	16,966	37,702
FY 2024 To Date	157,419	130,473	287,892

### Inkie.org Library

Brian Smith added the Recovering the Classics images to the Deals and Discounts page of the RAILS website. The images are updated, modern covers for popular titles in the public domain. These images are freely available for libraries to use for marketing and promotional purposes. Libraries can access [the images on the RAILS website](#).

#### Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
February 2024	2,055
FY 2024	13,600

## Explore More Illinois Update



In February, 880 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in January were Brookfield Zoo (52), Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (45), DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (24), Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie (18), and Volo Museum (10). The most popular Chicago attractions in February 2024 were the Field Museum (217) Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (199), Art Institute of Chicago (139), Chicago Children’s Museum (61), and the Museum of Science and Industry (20).

New attractions included the Peoria PlayHouse Museum and the Young People’s Theatre of Chicago.

On February 20, Jessica organized and hosted an ePass Networking Group meeting with other cultural pass programs around North America, with 10 attendees.

On February 28, Jessica presented via Zoom to the Illinois Association of Museums about Explore More Illinois, with 10 attendees.

### Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of February 29, 2024

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
338	90	1	4	433

### Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of February 29, 2024

Attractions	57
Total Attractions in 2024	58

### Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in February 2024

Organization	February 2024
RAILS/IHLS	118
CPL	762
Total	880

*Assist member libraries in preparing for the future*

## Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

### Western Illinois Digital Access Conference, 4/12

On Friday, April 12, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., RAILS and Western Illinois University are excited to host a free, one-day event on broadband and libraries. This event will feature speakers, networking, and a chance to find out more about what broadband opportunities lie ahead for libraries. This event is made possible by the Broadband READY Grant from the Illinois Office for Broadband. Registration is now open for this event in L2.



## Directors University 2.0

19 Directors from RAILS member libraries will attend Directors University 2.0, a three-day continuation of Directors University that will take place April 9 – 11. Session topics will include diversity, equity, and inclusion; building strong relationships; building board relationships; discussing difficult issues; budgeting best practices and allocating funds; capital improvement plans; performance improvement plans; succession planning; self- and staff-care; and more.

## DIY Strategic Planning Workshop Discount for RAILS Members

Fast Forward Libraries is offering RAILS members a discount on its online, three-part “DIY Strategic Planning” series that will give participants everything they need to facilitate a strategic planning process for their library (including lots of examples and document templates). The sessions are 12 – 2 p.m. on April 18, April 25, and May 2. The series is for any library planning to engage in strategic planning in the next year without a consultant. Details on the discount and registration are in this month’s editions of *RAILS E-News*.

## Recent CE Events

- “Employee Onboarding: Don't Lose Them at Hello”, RAILS Burr Ridge, March 14  
This in-person workshop presented by HR Source discussed the importance of developing employee onboarding programs, what should be included in them, and effective techniques to engage new employees before they even get in the door. This in-person session drew a very long waitlist and another, virtual session will be scheduled for late spring or early summer.
- “Problem Solving and Facilitation for Library Leaders”, webinar, March 21  
This workshop included a detailed explanation of the six steps in the problem-solving process as well as two techniques to use during that process: brainstorming and decision making. It also covered the facilitator's role, knowledge and expertise needed, and some of the skills of an effective facilitator.

## Upcoming CE Events

- “2024 Children's Books: A Plethora of Amazing Choices!”, webinar, March 26  
Over 150 RAILS members are registered to attend this workshop. Betsy Bird, Collection Development Manager at Evanston Public Library, will showcase a wide array of 2024 titles available for kids 0 – 12 years old.
- “Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace”, webinar, March 27  
Details for this event will be published in L2 soon.
- “Providing Empowerment and Motivation”, webinar, April 4  
Details for this event will be published in L2 soon.
- “When Generations Connect”, webinar, late April  
Phil Gwoke of BridgeWorks will delve into the identity of four distinct generations, explore the reasons behind their differences, dispel stereotypes that may cloud judgment, and provide actionable solutions to effectively engage every generation. Details for this event will be published in L2 soon.

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

**Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations**

### **New Steering Committee for Statewide Mentoring Program**

RAILS Cataloging Services Manager Nancy George has spearheaded a collaboration with the cataloging staff at the Illinois Heartland Library System to create a statewide mentoring program for library catalogers. Following a survey that indicated significant interest, a steering committee of staff from member libraries was formed, and the group had its first meeting on March 11. The program is anticipated to formally roll out to interested mentors and mentees around the Illinois Library Association's annual conference in October.

### **Continuing Education Collaboration**

RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff; Kate Kite, Continuing Education Coordinator Liaison for IHLS; and Kristin Pekoll, Conference and Continuing Education Manager for ILA, will meet at the end of every month to share ideas for collaboration, beginning in March 2024.

Kate Niehoff is joining other statewide continuing education providers at monthly COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies) Continuing Education networking meetings.

### **March 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.

March meeting topics included:

- A legislative update from ILA
- The situation at the Metropolis Public Library from IHLS
- A discussion of creating a Public Act 103-0100 FAQ for school libraries
- A discussion of a newly-formed AISLE task force to get certified school librarians in every school

And much more!

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

### **RAILS Participates in 2024 PrairieCat Resource Sharing Summit**

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek co-presented with Illinois State Library Director Greg McCormick during the PrairieCat Resource Sharing Summit held on March 7, 2024 at the DeKalb Public Library. The focus of this resource sharing summit was on the unserved, and approximately 45 staff from PrairieCat libraries attended this full-day event. The presentation from RAILS and the Illinois State Library focused on topics including non-resident cards, reciprocal borrowing, intergovernmental agreements, the Cards for Kids Act, as well as a lengthy question and answer session with participants.

### **Joe Filapek Presents Training for Lisle Library District Board of Trustees**

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek presented a training to the Lisle Library District Board of Trustees during their March 20th board meeting. Titled *Advocates & Allies: Trustee Leadership for Today's Public Library*, this training explored topics including trustee roles, board vs. director responsibilities, and the importance of establishing a trustee onboarding process.

### **Burr Ridge Network Cabling Project Completed**

The replacement of all network cabling, some of which was 25 years old, at the Burr Ridge location was successfully completed. This project also involved replacing aging switches and adding secure cabinets rather than racks for the switches, and improved the physical integrity and security of our network, created easier access for future upgrades, and allows compatible devices to access the network at higher speeds.

### **New Monitors and Stands for RAILS Staff**

While Burr Ridge-based staff were out of the office during the recabling project, the IT department used this time effectively and replaced all computer monitors and stands, and has continued with the monitor replacements at our other locations. Rockford's will be deployed following the facility move.

### **Anne Slaughter Participates in National Digital Inclusion Alliance Annual Conference**

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter attended the annual conference of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance in Philadelphia, which includes a growing community of library professionals working to address digital equity issues in their communities and states. She has also been working with Cook County's Digital Equity staff in the Office of the President on a potential collaboration involving libraries in suburban Cook County.

# FEBRUARY 2024: analytics

● Facebook

● Instagram

● Twitter

● LinkedIn

## followers



January 2024

February 2024

2,418

2,443

1,355

1,373

1,423

1,427

1,329

1,365

## reach



January 2024

February 2024

7,171

11,700

1,166

1,000

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

## impressions



January 2024

February 2024

N/A

N/A

6,133

5,079

2,500

2,800

2,642

2,280

## engagement



January 2024

February 2024

1,306

1,564

320

323

N/A

N/A

71

53

# FEBRUARY 2024: top posts

