

RAILS EDI Committee Report

Each quarter, RAILS will share a mix of what is happening at RAILS, ILA, and other relevant organizations as it relates to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility. If you know of an upcoming learning opportunity, networking group, or resource that we should highlight in our next RAILS Report to the committee, please feel to share with RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek.

This report is intended as both an opportunity to be aware of the wide variety of activities around EDI that RAILS is involved with, as well as an opportunity for EDI Committee members to receive additional training around EDI principles and best practice.

Welcome Kate Niehoff

We are pleased to have welcomed Kate Niehoff, our new Director of Consulting and Continuing Education, to RAILS on January 8th. Kate has worked in public libraries for 18 years, most recently as the Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships at the Schaumburg Township District Library. Kate has also worked at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, the Forest Park Public Library, and the Melrose Park Public Library. She has served on many committees including her work on the steering committee of Illinois Libraries Present, LACONI POP, and the RLA-CE Committee (now ReCharge). We are so pleased to have Kate here at RAILS and know she will bring great things to our organization and our member libraries.

RAILS Climate Team

The RAILS Climate Team continues to work on issues of RAILS internal culture with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion for all RAILS staff. Emphasis is placed on teamwork, a supportive learning environment, sharing of resources, and opportunities for deep discussions. The Climate Team has also been focused on staff engagement in a hybrid organization over multiple locations. The team works directly with EDI consultant Biz Lindsay-Ryan.

Projects included:

- Member Training Cohort (including evaluation)
- Connections Program for New Hires
- Staff Relationships/Staff Engagement Initiative
- National Library Week initiative recently added
- Internal projects – information only
- *Internal HR Practices*
- *Board Recruitment/Nomination Process*
- *Presenter/Consultant EDI Directory for Members*

The RAILS Climate Team meets monthly. The next meeting is on March 13, 2024.

RAILS Continuing Education and Training

- **Freedom Lifted**
As part of RAILS' ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) we continue to promote the online course to RAILS members: [Social Justice in Public Libraries from Freedom Lifted](#). This course content is relevant and applicable to all library types. Freedom Lifted founder Mia Henry says that the content allows learners to transition “from surface talk about diversity and inclusion to real, honest conversations about justice.” This asynchronous course is a flexible learning opportunity that is suited for individual learners or a group learning environment.
Application Deadline for RAILS Continuing Education Event Grants Was on February 2, 2024
- RAILS invited 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. RAILS awarded a total of five grants which included two events focused on EDI-centered topics:
 - **BIPOC Library Workers networking group:** “Navigating White Spaces as a BIPOC Library Worker”, presented by Tracie D. Hall
 - **Stickney-Forest View Public Library District:** “Actively Anti-Racist Service to Readers”, presented by Becky Spratford

Additional 2024 Learning Opportunities

- **March 13, 2024 | 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm** [Seeing Yourself in the Academic Library: Performing a Diversity Audit on a College Fiction Collection](#)
ILA Noon Network. In this webinar, you'll gain insights into the techniques for conducting a diversity audit of your collection, understand key takeaways from the findings, explore future steps, and recognize the imperative for academic libraries to assess the diversity of their materials. For more information about this event, including speaker bio, visit the ILA event page.
- **March 13, 2024 | 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm** ["Serving Patrons with Dementia and Their Caregivers at the Library," Webinar](#) Please join us for a fantastic discussion with three professionals that have outstanding experience in this field. Increase your understanding for meeting the unique needs of this community and discover successful strategies for delivering services through programming, in-house kits, and memory cafes. Register for this program hosted by LACONI-POP.
- **April 4, 2024 | 1:30 pm** [ALA - Collection Diversity Audits: 10 Steps to Success](#)
To ensure that your library's collection represents the entire community, it is essential to periodically evaluate the representation included in your materials, assess gaps, and create new processes to meet your community's needs. Implementing a diversity audit is critical to understanding the current state of your collection and will lead the way as you develop plans to expand, improve, and adapt your collection. In this webinar, learn how to create and conduct a diversity audit, evaluate materials for inclusivity, and develop strategies for library users to find diverse materials in the collection. You'll leave this webinar with concrete, step-by-step instructions on conducting a diversity audit and using your findings to improve your collection.

- **ALA — Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures is pleased to announce an updated list of selections for the second “Best of Core Forum” webinar collection.** These webinars are based on programs presented at the 2023 Core Forum. The presenters are adapting the program content into live webinars to extend the reach of their sessions and expertise.
- [Onboarding with Cultural Humility and Appreciative Inquiry](#)
Live Webinar: Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 1 - 2 p.m. CT
- [Organizing for Open: Aligning Organizational Structures with Open Values](#)
Live Webinar: Wednesday, April 24, 2024, 1 - 2 p.m. CT
- [White Supremacy in the Stacks](#)
Live Webinar: Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 1 - 2 p.m. CT
- [When the Tools are Broken: \(Re\)Building Community](#)
Live Webinar: Tuesday, May 14, 2024, 1 - 2 p.m. CT
- [An Integrated Approach to a Diversity Audit](#)
Live Webinar: Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 1 - 2 p.m. CT

Additional Initiatives

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>

RAILS Networking Groups

BIPOC Library Workers

This group aims to foster connection, share resources and discuss specific experiences in a safe, welcome, and open space for all library workers members who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. We will meet virtually every other month for two hours via Zoom. Meetings are posted to the L2 calendar and communications about them will be posted to the group's mailing list.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Metadata Networking Group

Would you like to be part of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Metadata Networking Group? The group aims to foster the importance of a shared understanding to create and maintain more equitable, diverse, and inclusive metadata content. This group is open to all library staff of all types and sizes. This group will host regular discussions on DEI topics related to catalog data. Meetings will be listed on the L2 calendar as they are scheduled.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team in Youth Services

Are you interested in meeting with like-minded Youth Services library staff to discuss diversity of all kinds? Whether it be hiring diverse presenters, planning inclusive programming, selecting diverse materials for collection development and more...we want to discuss it! Join us to help diversify Youth Services.