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Executive Director Report, April 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Welcome Jessica Silva!

Jessica Silva started in her new role as the RAILS Member Engagement Specialist on April 3. This role was vacated by Dan Bostrom when he was promoted to RAILS Director of Marketing and Communications in October 2023. Jessica has terrific experience in K-12 school and academic libraries, most recently as a faculty librarian at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas. Jessica served as co-chair of the Texas Library Association's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee, was a member of TLA's Public Relations and Marketing committee, and she served on multiple book award committees in Texas. We are very excited for the RAILS membership to get to know Jessica in her new role here in Illinois.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the most recent Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee meeting on April 1st. Lobbyist Derek Blaida highlighted important deadlines for the state legislature. 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%). Passed the House on April 15th (90-17), moved to the Senate on April 16th, and currently has eighteen 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 was re-referred to the Rules Committee on April 5th and it has two co-sponsors.
- HB4567: Amends the criminal code to include library employees as protected in relation to threats and disorderly conduct. This bill was sponsored by Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias as an additional support for libraries facing threats and other conduct challenges. Has had its Second Reading in the House and has nineteen co-sponsors.
- HB4111: Amends the Illinois Local Library Act and the Public Library District Act of 1991. Requires competitive bidding for contracts in excess of $30,000 (rather than $25,000) for specified improvements and equipment purchases. This was re-referred to Rules Committee on April 5th. This bill has two 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. Three 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 also helped ILA's Public Policy Committee to compile information from around the state about public bid notices in their local newspapers. The compiled information was presented at the April PPC meeting, and the group will discuss further action in May.

FY2025 System Area and Per Capita Grant

As we briefly discussed last month, 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. There is a memo and a draft version of the FY2025 Operational Plan in your packet for your review, and I'll look forward to discussing it in more detail at the meeting.

RAILS Minute

In April, the RAILS Minute highlighted the upcoming RAILS Board election, opportunities to connect with RAILS at the upcoming Reaching Forward North conference, the My Library Is… grant recipients, and updates on library-related legislation. 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.

2024 Public Library Association (PLA) Conference in Columbus

Earlier this month I had the opportunity (along with five RAILS staff members) to attend the PLA Conference in Columbus, Ohio. It was a robust in-person conference this year and it was fantastic to see so many RAILS members during our time there. I was able to attend continuing education programming on crisis communication, human centered design challenges for leadership, best practices in fostering an inclusive culture, and many more. I also had the chance to connect with our vendors, library leadership from around the country, and many familiar faces from Illinois. I'm always grateful for the chance to attend a PLA conference and this year was no different!

Western Illinois Digital Access Conference

RAILS and Western Illinois University were able to host a free, one-day event on Broadband and libraries on Friday, April 12 in Macomb. The event featured a keynote from IHLS IT Director Troy Brown about why Broadband is critical to Illinois libraries, and included additional programs on outreach and partnerships at the WIU libraries, social media literacy and outreach, table talks on a number of topics relevant to digital equity, discussion of upcoming opportunities for Broadband support from the Illinois Office of Broadband, and a closing program on economic development in Western Illinois. I was so delighted to be there - it was a great day with wonderful connections with our RAILS members in Western-Central Illinois.

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

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. This program need was identified by our EDI Board committee.

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 Delivery Staff

After consideration by the RAILS Climate Team, a shorter form EDI focused training is being developed specifically for our Delivery Team. This training will focus on success strategies for work at RAILS using EDI principles, and it will be recorded so it can be shared with staff when onboarding them to the department. Our plan is that this program will be repeated annually with all Delivery staff.

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 collected a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the law so that we can create documentation that will be shared by our organizations. Staff from IHLS are now taking the lead on developing responses to the collected questions, and will share progress with the group at the next Partnership meeting. We plan to have this document ready to share by this summer.

RSA Independence Project

RSA Executive Director Kendal Orrison updated us to let us know that RSA has now met the minimum requirement of libraries required to sign IGAs in order to formally trigger the conversion to an Illinois Intergovernmental Instrumentality on July 1, 2024. There is a list of RSA members who have signed the IGA on the Membership Page of the support site, near the bottom of the page.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Joint Board meeting with Illinois Heartland Library System Postponed

We will be meeting again on April 25 to discuss potential fall dates to meet in Bloomington. Thank you all for your prompt responses to the survey and we look forward to having more details to share about new dates soon.

Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) Meeting on March 28

I attended the March 28 ISLAC meeting in Springfield. Topics on the agenda included an update on Broadband and BEAD efforts from Secretary of State staffer Anna Claussen, more information about the state funded Dolly Parton Library initiative, ISL reports on the FY25 budget for library and literacy programs, the e-resources database package, updated rules allowing nonresidents to use e-resources, information on the Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative, updates on the Secretary's proposed bill to amend the criminal code for offenses and acts of violence against public libraries (HB4567), and the expectation that there will be appointments for new committee members (including myself) forthcoming. Anna Claussen and Ryan Johnson also presented on progress on a public library court access project that will develop legal support for individuals in the public library across Illinois.

Conversation with Secretary Giannoulias and RAILS Members

The Illinois State Library has distributed invitations to all public library directors in RAILS for a Zoom meeting with the Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias. Directors may choose between a virtual meeting on April 22 or April 29. We encourage all RAILS public library directors to take advantage of this opportunity. The Illinois State Library is also considering similar events for the Secretary to meet virtually with school librarians later in the year.

Looking Ahead to May

- **May Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS CE and Consulting Program Overview and an update on the eRead Illinois Data Project**

This Month at RAILS – April 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 Names Jessica Silva Member Engagement Specialist

Jessica Silva has been selected as RAILS Member Engagement Specialist, effective April 3, 2024. Silva fills the space previously vacated by Dan Bostrom, who was promoted to RAILS Director of Marketing and Communications in October 2023.

Silva has 12 years of experience in education and librarianship, most recently as a faculty librarian at Austin Community College (ACC) in Austin, Texas. As the ACC Library Services Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) committee co-chair, Silva led a team of librarians navigating equity practices within the institution and developed marketing and social media for their library division.

As the Member Engagement Specialist, Silva will plan and implement a regular schedule of events with an emphasis on sharing and networking. She will also build and maintain relationships with individuals, organizations, and groups in an effort to engage and inform library workers on system benefits.

RAILS Awards 2024 My Library Is… Grants

The Reaching Across Illinois Libraries System (RAILS) has selected 28 projects to receive My library Is… Grants. The total amount funded for these projects is $104,204.15.

The purpose of these grants is to provide an opportunity for libraries to focus on projects that help tell the library story and increase visibility and support for libraries in general. For a full list of recipients, please see the recent press release. Also, for more data about these grants, please see the data visualization created by RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki at the end of this report.

Eighth Annual Directors University, July 30-August 1

The eighth annual Directors University will be held July 30 – August 1st from the Marriott hotel in Bloomington-Normal. This professional development and networking opportunity is intended for new public library directors and directors new to Illinois public libraries. RAILS continues to be heavily involved with the planning and execution of Directors University alongside our partners at IHLS, ILA, and the Illinois State Library. More information can be found on the ILA website.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

RAILCAR Updates
In recent months two RAILCAR dashboards have been shared during Consortia Committee meetings focusing on public library and LLSAP comparisons. The dashboards are the first results created from the RAILCAR dataset that combines information from many sources such as L2, IPLAR, and Certification. Next steps are to develop snapshot reports from libraries and LLSAPs, develop dashboards for school, academic, and special libraries, and add other datasets as needed.

Derucki Participates in School Library Retreat Event
On April 3, RAILS Data Research Specialist Janette Derucki joined library staff members from University High School and Thomas Metcalf School at ISU's Milner Library for the Illinois State University Lab Schools Library Retreat. The event focused on building and generating reports in Alma and the application of report data in collection management and for other school library operations.

RAILS Social Media Engagement
See the report at the end for info on our March 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.

Reading Program Management Resource Savings
In March, the renewal concluded for a reading program management resource, saving libraries $4,800. The renewal/sign-ups for July 1 subscriptions dates began for digital newspapers and magazines, cataloging resources and periodical databases.

Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos
In March, RAILS Library Resource Specialist Jody Rubel Jody Rubel coordinated three vendor demonstrations. One vendor provided an overview of five products that support homeschool and independent learners and their educators. Fourteen libraries registered for the two webinars. A link to the webinar recording is posted under the resource Deals & Discounts page. On March 28, a representative from a small business advisor software company demonstrated a powerful interactive resource for planning, starting, managing and a growing business. Nine libraries registered for the event.

ConsortiaManager & Data Management
RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Jenny Taylor, Associate Director of E-Resources at CARLI, met on March 19 to discuss issues and procedures pertaining to consortial group purchasing.

Final changes were applied to the staff eRead Illinois dashboard in March. Wayne Dixon implemented functionality to accommodate special situations where libraries cannot use the standard join/renew form on the website.

Leila Heath met with Consortia Purchasing Managers from Amigos, Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS) and Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) on March 18. The group discussed issues and procedures related to purchasing across large, multi-type consortia. The group meets periodically throughout the year.

Leila Heath and Jody Rubel attended the ELSUM Networking Meeting on March 25, which discusses topics related to e-resources, including usage, promotion opportunities and purchasing. Leila spoke briefly about the RAILS deals program and considerations.

Anna Behm, Leila Heath, and Jody Rubel attended the PLA conference in Columbus, Ohio April 2 – 5. The team met with existing vendor partners to discuss issues and expansion of current offerings. We also explored potential new resources for inclusion in Deals & Discounts. Leila's highlights included the daily "Big Ideas" presentations, particularly Shola Richards session about workplace happiness and engagement. Jody's highlight included a session on how an IMLS grant aided in combatting digital inequities at a county library. Anna attended sessions about library services for non-English speakers and using data for equity work. There were also opportunities to meet and network with librarians.

Career Online High School Update

Career Online High School is an 18-credit, vocation-based high school completion program.

COHS Stats as of March 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
424	204	87	60%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

Find More Illinois is in the process of onboarding our second academic library, South Suburban Community College. Two more high school libraries are also onboarding. The CCS libraries are in the testing phase with the FMI software and training that is planned for the middle of April and will include the first twelve libraries that will going live with FMI. The next group of CCS libraries has training planned for the summer.

RSA Independence Project Update

As an important milestone of their independence project, RSA has received enough signed intergovernmental agreements from their member libraries to formally trigger the conversion to an Illinois Intergovernmental Instrumentality on July 1st, 2024. A total of 75 libraries have signed this IGA and RSA staff will continue contacting remaining libraries over the next couple months to encourage their response.

eRead Illinois Update

The eRead Illinois renewal period began on March 18. As of April 7, 64 public libraries, 18 academic libraires, 1 special library, and 159 school buildings have renewed their membership in eRead Illinois. This is in addition to the PrairieCat and RSA libraries, which have renewed eRead Illinois as a complete consortium.

RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm, Leila Heath, Monica Harris, and Joe Filapek met with the team at Baker & Taylor on March 21 to discuss some recent issues with ordering holds via Baker & Taylor's ordering platform, TS360. Baker & Taylor has since taken steps to resolve the issues.

Anna Behm gave a presentation about eRead Illinois Boundless at RSA day on March 20. She co-presented with Genna Buhr from the Fondulac Public Library District who spoke about the Alliance Digital Media Overdrive consortium. The session was held twice and well attended.

Anna Behm, Grant Halter, and Quinn McKissock met with the team at Baker & Taylor on March 26 to discuss and address some discrepancies in the data RAILS receives about eRead Illinois. Baker & Taylor is investigating.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
March 2024	19,430	17,885	37,315
FY 2024 To Date	176,849	148,358	325,207

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
March 2024	1,887
FY 2024	15,487

eRead Illinois Data Analysis Project

RAILS Data Analysis Intern, Quinn McKissock, has been working hard on cleaning and analyzing data from the eRead program. Much of their time has been spent reconciling the complex reports Baker & Taylor shares, including order, holds, and circulation. Quinn is currently preparing summarized results of their analysis to share with the Board in May, as well as establishing manageable processes for maintaining the data after their internship concludes and creating useful dashboards for our eRead decision-makers.

Explore More Illinois Update

In March 2024, 1,309 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in March were:

- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (164)
- Brookfield Zoo (39)
- DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville (35)

- Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie (31)
- Peoria Park District PlayHouse Children's Museum (16)

The most popular Chicago attractions in February 2024 were:

- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (226)
- Museum of Science and Industry (225)
- Field Museum (204)
- Art Institute of Chicago (144
- American Writers' Museum (25)

New attractions included the Glencoe Park District Glencoe Beach, Western Illinois Museum in Macomb, Historic Auto Attractions in Roscoe, and the Des Plaines History Museum.

On March 14, RAILS Special Projects Librarian Jessica Barnes and Dan Bostrom met with Carol Hogan-Downey from IHLS and Shamil Clay from CPL about the rebranding project for Explore More Illinois.

On March 19, Jessica Barnes presented and recorded an Explore More Illinois Informational Webinar. There were 10 attendees and 39 people who signed up to receive the recording.

On March 21, Jessica Barnes presented and recorded an Explore More Illinois for No ILS/Small ILS webinar. There were 5 attendees and 11 people who signed up to receive the recording.

Explore More Illinois is currently accepting new libraries through May 15. The next enrollment period will start November 1.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of March 31, 2024

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
338	91	1	4	434

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of March 31, 2024

Attractions	60
Total Attractions in 2024	62

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in March 2024

Organization	February 2024
RAILS/IHLS	248
CPL	1,061
Total	1,309

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

Directors University & Directors University 2.0

Applications are now being accepted for Directors University, to be held July 30 – August 1. This three-day training will prepare public library directors for their new executive roles and provide opportunities for networking and team building through lectures and small, informal discussions. Topics include library & employment law, policies, budgeting, board-director relations, leadership, and Illinois State Library and system competencies. Approximately fifty participants will be selected to attend.

Directors University 2.0, a three-day continuation of Directors University, took place April 9 – 11. 19 RAILS member library directors attended, including those from the following libraries:

- Bensenville Community Public Library
- Colona District Public Library
- Cordova District Library
- Crystal Lake Public Library
- Edwards River Public Library
- Frankfort Public Library District
- Franklin Grove Public Library
- Genoa Public Library District
- Hillside Public Library
- Maple Park Public Library
- Markham Public Library
- North Pike District Library
- Palatine Public Library District
- Paw Paw Public Library District
- Rushville Public Library
- Sandwich Public Library District
- South Beloit Public Library
- Sycamore Public Library
- Zion-Benton Public Library District.

From one DU 2.0 attendee: "Thank you! I really am thankful for this opportunity to attend the conference. I found out I am not alone! Useful: Budgets-HR-Capital Improvements. I made some new friends and found encouragement. I have been struggling in my position and found my passion rekindled. I feel hopeful about my job for the first time in a long time – you all did a fantastic job with the conference."

Western Illinois Digital Access Conference

33 people attended the Western Illinois Digital Access Conference in Macomb, IL on Friday, April 12. This event was co-hosted by Western Illinois University and RAILS. Topics discussed included broadband, digital access, and bridging the digital divide. This conference was made possible by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Broadband.

Western Illinois Digital Access Grants

RAILS and Western Illinois University (WIU) announced the recipients of the 2024 Western Illinois Digital Access Mini-Grants and Chromebook Lending Grants. These grants were made possible by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Broadband.

The following RAILS libraries each received $650 to initiate projects that address digital access in their communities:

- Camp Point Public Library
- Clover Public Library District
- Colchester District Library
- Greig Memorial Library
- North Pike District Library
- Pittsfield Public Library
- Rushville Public Library
- Warsaw Public Library

The following RAILS libraries each received up to four LTE-enabled Chromebooks:

- Carthage Public Library District
- Clover Public Library District
- Colchester District Library
- La Harpe Carnegie Public Library District
- North Pike District Library
- Pittsfield Public Library

Continuing Education (CE) Grant Event: Navigating White Spaces as a BIPOC Library Worker

Approximately 100 people attended “Navigating White Spaces as a BIPOC Library Worker” presented by Tracie D. Hall through a RAILS CE grant that was awarded to the BIPOC Library Workers networking group. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. “It was one of the most beneficial webinars I've attended. Thank you for a wonderful program, and for providing grants that assist in continuing education.” - Cathy L.

Freedom Lifted’s Social Justice in Public Libraries: Participants Share Their Feedback

RAILS recently conducted a short survey to find out how current participants are experiencing the new Social Justice in Public Libraries program from Freedom Lifted. The feedback was almost entirely positive. Here are a few quotes from people who have tried the program:

- “Social Justice for Public Libraries is a fantastic program filled to the brim with information."
- "Easy to go through. I like that it was split into sections so that I could go at my own pace and not do the whole thing all at once."
- "The instructor is very knowledgeable about this subject and the topics really make you think about interacting with patrons of all different cultures and backgrounds."

DIY Strategic Planning Workshop Discount for RAILS Members

27 RAILS member library staff received a discount on their registration for Fast Forward Libraries’ online, three-part “DIY Strategic Planning” series on April 18, April 25, and May 2.

Recent CE Events

- **"2024 Children's Books: A Plethora of Amazing Choices!",** webinar, March 26
  Over 150 RAILS members attended this workshop. From a school librarian who attended: "I was blown away by this webinar. I TRULY enjoyed it and learned so much...The speaker was funny, sincere, engaging, enthusiastic. Thank you for this webinar."
- **"Motivation and Empowerment: Skills for Library Leaders",** webinar, April 4
  This workshop examined both motivators and demotivators, motivation strategies, and the three keys to creating an empowering environment.
- **"Getting Started with OpenRefine",** webinar, April 17
  This session introduced members to the basics for installing OpenRefine (a tool for complex data), importing data, filtering and faceting, and editing data in bulk, as well as connecting to other data sources for reconciling thier data.
- **"Why Emotional Intelligence Matters at Work",** webinar, April 22
  This webinar helped attendees learn how understanding the emotions of themselves and others can lead to more collaborative and productive work relationships. Managers gained tools to help them with their own jobs and also to help their direct reports.
- **"When Generations Connect: Navigating Generational Dynamics**", webinar, April 24
  Almost 200 RAILS members registered to hear international speaker Phil Gwoke delve into the identity of each generation, explore the reasons behind their differences, dispel stereotypes that may cloud judgment, and provide actionable solutions.

Upcoming CE Events

- **"EDI Trustee Training: Navigating Difference with Library Boards", meeting, April 26**
  Elisabeth "Biz" Lindsay-Ryan will give a general overview of current trends and research on library board and staff handling diversity topics, particularly race, gender, ability, and family. The conversation will include understanding our own perspectives and how these may impact our communities.
- **"Using Digitized Historical Newspaper Collections for Reference Work", webinar, May 9**
  Evanston Public Library recently worked with NewsBank to digitize local newspapers dating back to 1872. This webinar will introduce members to several of the most important areas of reference and research that can be supported by this new tool.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

United Against Book Bans in Illinois Update

Through the work of a coalition of staff from library organizations including ILA, AISLE, RAILS, IHLS, and CARLI, volunteer regional response teams have been formed throughout Illinois to help support the freedom to read and to serve as a resource for libraries experiencing material challenges. Nearly 150 library workers and advocates have volunteered for these teams, and the support request form went live on the ILA website on April 1. During the first two weeks, we have received two requests for support from staff at RAILS member libraries.

April 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.

April meeting topics included:

- Updates to the SLATE data dashboard
- A discussion of creating an FAQ for school libraries for Public Act 103-0100
- A discussion of the recent Illinois Readers Choice Awards statement
- Updates on the work of the United Against Book Bans in Illinois group

And much more!

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

RAILS Participates in 2024 ICOLC Annual Meeting

Joe Filapek and Leila Heath attended the 2024 ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) Annual Meeting in Anaheim April 14-17. This event brings together representatives from library consortia across North America and features a variety of presentations and small group discussions. Topics during this year's annual meeting included Open Access, demonstrating consortial value, and DEI consortial initiatives. Learn more about ICOLC here.

Filapek Participates in ILA Trustee Forum Workshop

Joe Filapek participated in a panel discussion during the ILA Trustee Forum workshop on April 6 titled "Illinois Library Trustees: What's the Job and What I Wish I had Known?" Facilitated by former RAILS board member Becky Spratford, trustees from IHLS and RAILS member libraries discussed their experiences as library trustees.

RAILS IT Department Completes Rockford Work

The RAILS IT Department spent much of March working to update the new Rockford facility. The department shifted network equipment, wifi, security cameras, and other technology.

MARCH 2024: analytics

Facebook Instagram Twitter LinkedIn

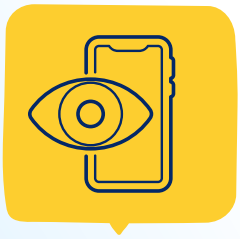
followers

	February 2024	March 2024
Facebook	2,443	2,465
Instagram	1,373	1,381
Twitter	1,427	1,435
LinkedIn	1,365	1,412

reach

	February 2024	March 2024
Facebook	11,700	8,930
Instagram	1,000	1,021
Twitter	N/A	N/A
LinkedIn	N/A	N/A

impressions

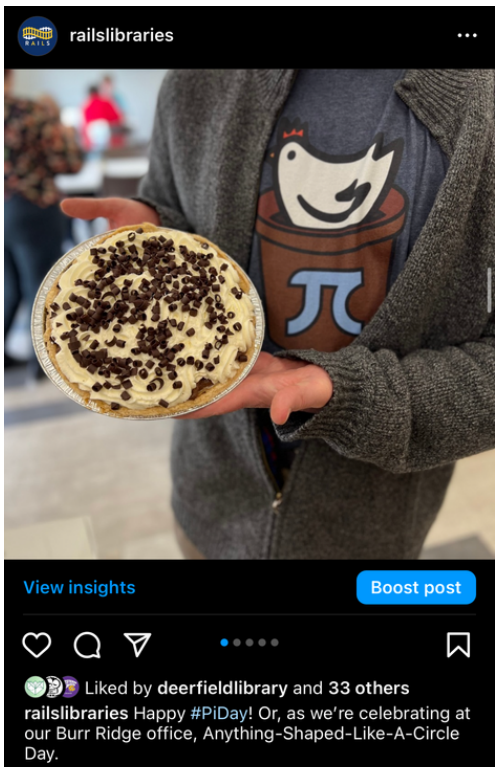


	February 2024	March 2024
Facebook	N/A	N/A
Instagram	5,079	4,663
Twitter	2,800	2,000
LinkedIn	2,280	4,325

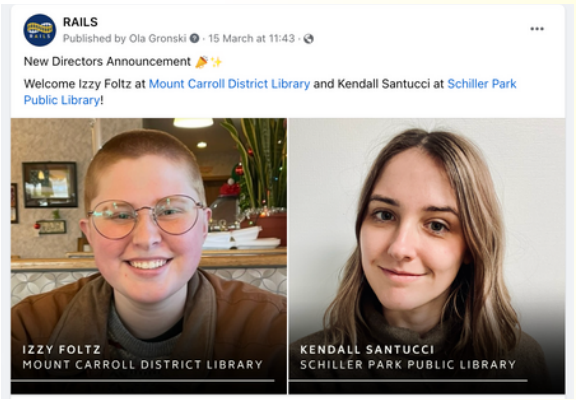
engagement

	February 2024	March 2024
Facebook	1,564	1,948
Instagram	323	234
Twitter	N/A	N/A
LinkedIn	53	104

MARCH 2024: top posts



Instagram

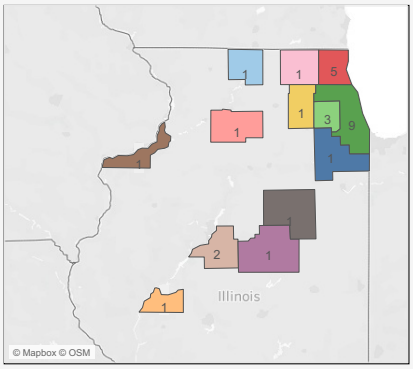


Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

My Library Is... 2024 Grant Recipients



Recipient Counties

- Cass
- Cook
- DuPage
- Kane
- Lake
- Lee
- Livingston
- McHenry
- McLean
- Rock Island
- Tazewell
- Will
- Winnebago

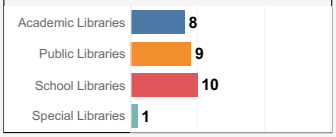
Key Facts

Total Applicants: 53

Total Recipients: 28 (53%)

Total Funding Provided: $104,204.15

Recipients by Library Type



RAILS

Agency Location - Proximity to Chicago		
	Chicagoland	71.43% 20
	Outside Chicagoland	28.57% 8

Recipients & Projects Funded

Academic Libraries	A.C. Buehler Library at Elmhurst University	Ready Player One Lounge- a collaborative student veteran/ traditional student l..	$3,400.00
	Aurora University - Phillips Library	Reaching Students with Technology and Books	$5,000.00
	Concordia University Chicago	Children and College Students Embracing the Future Together	$5,000.00
	Illinois Wesleyan University - The Ames Library	My Library Is…Storied	$5,000.00
	McHenry County College	Increasing Public Awareness and Access with the Archives	$4,978.00
	Rockford University	Capturing Our Story at Rockford University	$2,006.63
	Roosevelt University Murray Green Library	Roosevelt University Right to Read Poster Project	$4,144.40
	Sauk Valley Community College	My Library Is Visible, Accessible, and Vital	$3,229.45
Public Libraries	Downers Grove Public Library	Summer Reading Club For All	$4,000.00
	Lake Bluff Public Library	My Library Is...Planning for the Future: A Community Engagement Initiative for ..	$5,000.00
	Manhattan-Elwood Public Library District	Mi biblioteca es.....inclusiva.	$4,285.99
	Moline Public Library	Your Free Pass to …. Joint Marketing Campaign	$3,562.00
	Park Forest Public Library	My Library Is...Becoming Dementia Inclusive	$1,950.00
	Prairie Creek Public Library District	Let Us Introduce the Library	$2,700.00
	Washington District Library	Washington District Library StoryWalk®	$5,000.00
	Worth Public Library District	Removing Barriers: Translating Collateral into Community Languages	$4,650.00
	Zion-Benton Public Library District	Sensory Kits for Children	$523.35
School Libraries	Beach Park Community Consolidated School District..	My Library Is...More Than Books	$5,000.00
	District 50 Schools	My Library is... Overhauling Our History!	$3,750.00
	Gower School District #62	Meeting the needs of our diverse student population	$5,000.00
	Hibbard Elementary School - City of Chicago School..	My Library is Transforming	$5,000.00
	Horizon Science Academy - McKinley Park	HSA McKinley Graphic Novel Development	$5,000.00
	Lake Zurich CUSD 95	Bilingual books to meet my student's needs.	$1,151.55
	Marist High School	Project Renew: ignite imagination with games and making	$2,700.00
	River Trails School District 26	Adding diverse titles to the River Trails Middle School library collection	$2,400.00
	Virginia Community Unit #64	High School fiction and Elementary nonfiction expansion	$3,912.78
	Woodland CCSD #50 - Woodland Middle School	My library needs the truth...in Spanish!!	$2,400.00
Special Lib..	Old Town School of Folk Music	Library Signs: Powerful Tools for Enhancing Visibility in a Community Music Sc..	$3,460.00

REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

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Consortial Reports

April 15, 2024

Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI/I-Share)

No update is available at this time.

Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)

Find More Illinois Implementation

D. Wischmeyer is working with Eric Bain (RAILS) on our training plan and content for CCS members.

Member Engagement Survey

D. Wischmeyer has compiled and analyzed member engagement data from FY22-23. Data reviewed includes staff and library attendance at technical and advisory group meetings and CCS-led training sessions. Data shows attendance varies significantly by library and by CCS group. To help understand current and improve future engagement, CCS will create and share an engagement survey with key library contacts.

ILS Data in Decision-Making

CCS Governing Board engaged in an ideation activity to help define member library goals related to data collection and analysis for strategic decision-making. CCS will work the results into setting our upcoming strategic directions for the year and next year's strategic planning process.

Review of Fine Count Data

R. Barth continues to work on a comparison of ILS data and RAILS Delivery Fine Count data to determine the feasibility of using an automated rather than manual count.

Pinnacle Library Cooperative

Pinnacle and Pours

From April 1 - May 31, Pinnacle libraries will be collaborating with local breweries and coffee shops for a shared programming event called Pinnacle and Pours. Patrons are encouraged to visit participating restaurants, grab a drink, and scan the QR code to enter to win prizes. To coincide with the event, libraries will also be hosting a variety of themed programs throughout the next few months. More information is available at pinnaclelibraries.org/pours.

IUG Conference

In March, Pinnacle staff attended and presented at the Innovative Users Group conference in Detroit, MI.

Find More Illinois

At the March board meeting, the board voted that we would not be renewing our consortial-level participation in Find More Illinois. Member libraries may choose to participate at an individual level.

PrairieCat

Mills & Petrie Memorial Library and Gymnasium – Membership Upgrade

Mills & Petrie Memorial Library and Gymnasium is a current PrairieCat Union List member. The library uses ResourceMate for cataloging, but does not have an automated system for patron records or circulation. Kim Toole, interim director, inquired about upgrading their membership from Union List to Basic Online level. The library board reviewed the upgrade and approved the IGA. The signed IGA will go to the April PrairieCat Delegates Assembly meeting for approval. The library plans to submit a RAILS Catalog Membership Grant for assistance with this project.

Oglesby Public Library District – Membership Change

The Oglesby Public Library District requested to downgrade from Fully Participating to Basic Online membership level. The updated IGA will be reviewed at the April PrairieCat Delegates Assembly meeting.

PrairieCat Resource Sharing Summit

PrairieCat hosted our annual Resource Sharing Summit on March 7 at the DeKalb Public Library. We had 40 people in attendance and positive feedback from survey results. This year's topic was Serving the Unserved. Joe Filapek, RAILS Associate Executive Director, and Greg McCormick, Illinois State Library Director, presented on laws around non-resident cards, reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loan, and other related topics. They also addressed common issues and questions on these topics. In the afternoon, attendees had breakout table discussions around service to the unhoused, cards for kids, cards for veterans, IGAs among community organizations, and other outreach initiatives. It was a useful and informative event.

Vega Discover – Kids Catalog

PrairieCat staff are working on configuring the Vega Discover Kids Catalog. The customizations allow for a more kid-friendly design and several themed pages such as subjects and series.

Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

No update is available at this time.

Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA)

RSA Independence Project Update

Phase 1 of the RSA Independence Project (RIP) remains on track. On March 1st, we rolled out final versions of the new Intergovernmental Agreement to reform RSA's governance and organizational type, new Bylaws, and a new fee structure. Our member libraries agree to all three of these documents by signing the IGA. In addition to the three major documents, we included 19 other support documents covering various administrative, history, and in-depth fee structure information.

RSA Membership, Support Site, and Site Visits

As of 21 March, we have had 31 public, 13 school, 1 academic, and 1 special library return signed IGAs. We've also heard from 3 schools who will not remain in RSA long-term due to the inevitable increase in fees due to our independence from RAILS. Our members have through June to return signed IGA's to remain RSA members.

As you might imagine, our major focus over the next three months is working with our members to ensure they have all the information they need to examine their options, answer all their Board or Administrative questions, and return the IGA's to us. Full details are available on the RSA Independence Project page on our support site: https://support.librariesofrsa.org/independence-project/

The RSA Support Site has been updated with an all new, document index. This index lists all RSA policies standards, procedures, guides, cheat sheets, and information documents. All are grouped into overall system or operational topics, then all documents pertaining to an individual topic is consolidated to make discovery and linking easier. This has been a long-time RSA and member library wish-list item and we're happy it's finally available. Having a consolidated listing of all RSA member facing documentation also helps us target what needs reworked or reviewed based on document age.

Cataloging and Operations staff are conducting in person library visits. We're working through the list of libraries who want visits prior to setting up visits with those who may be less thrilled to see us. Our target is to visit each of our 140-ish members at least once every other year.

Board of Directors

We're also in the process of creating a Board of Directors slate to elect a brand new, 12-person, Board to be seated on 1 July 2024. We're taking volunteers now and have a three-person nominating committee running the process. Our schools and small public libraries have a hard time serving on the Board. To help make serving on the Board more feasible for members like this, we've instituted a $1,000 a year 'rebate' at the end of each year of Board service. These checks will be issued to the 12 libraries with staff serving on the Board. This has dramatically increased the number of small library Directors interested in potentially serving on the RSA Board.

SirsiDynix and ILS Servers

SirsiDynix's mobile catalog app, from Solus, is back online as of mid-February. RSA worked with SirsiDynix to beta test the changes that were required to get it back online. We identified several issues and were glad to be able to offer this to our patrons again. Approximately 50% of all online payments made by patrons came in via this app. Our member libraries are happy to be able to offer this again as it's been the #1 patron complaint since late November when it went offline for all SirsiDynix customers.

RSA has updated several ILS products including our Symphony servers. We're currently running the latest versions of all software. We're also experimenting with several changes to our patron catalog including new homepage customizations and updated book rivers for all libraries. We've also started to consider a total rebrand of patron facing products. This project has been pushed to the new RSA Board for their input, guidance, and leadership.

RSA Day

RSA Day 2024 was held on the 20th of March. We had almost 150 library staff attend in person this year. Attendance continues to grow year over year. Most of the events were non-RSA system specific and

aimed at library frontline staff. Feedback has been very positive and we thank RAILS for the event grant which helped cover the speakers and building costs!

System Wide Automated Network (SWAN)

Single sign-on project

SWAN will begin work on a single sign-on solution to bring our 1,200 library staff logins to allow access to our support and learning platforms with a single login. Our goal is to make library staff access to these software platforms smoother and more secure. We have approved an agreement to work with Ping Identity to provide a SAML solution for the following platforms requiring login:

- Support website using Drupal CMS
- Inquisiq learning management system
- Community forums using Discourse
- BLUEcloud Staff: our web-based library management system

We are already providing library patrons with a single sign-on solution to online research platforms and e-content through our OpenAthens service.

Aspen LiDA features development

Events integration is now included with the 24.02 release of Aspen Library Discovery App (LiDA). Our support and software developer Bywater Solutions is still working on additional enhancements to bring events to the fore in the app, but the initial integration is complete. Libraries that have added their Library Market, Communico, or Springshare calendars will see events in both Aspen Discovery and Aspen LiDA.

We are still working with Bywater to connect Symphony for Scan-and-Go, the self-checkout feature in the LiDA app.

Membership survey completed

We recently completed a survey to determine satisfaction with the six software platforms provided by SWAN for its 100-member libraries. The survey specifically requested rating and feedback on the following:

- WorkFlows: staff client from SirsiDynix
- BLUEcloud Analytics: data analysis and reporting from SirsiDynix
- MobileStaff: staff tablet-based app from SirsiDynix
- Aspen Discovery: SWAN OPAC supported and developed with ByWater Solutions
- MessageBee: notification platform with Unique Management Solutions
- WorldShare ILL & WorldCat Discovery: OCLC group-services for Illinois libraries, managed by SWAN

The survey's written comments are undergoing sorting and analysis, with recommendations for actionable next steps.