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Executive Director Report, June 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Illinois House Bill 4224 Moves to Omnibus Bill

You may have already seen this news related to the library treasurer bonds bill from the most recent ILA alert, but just in case:

Contained within the 1300-page revenue omnibus amendment, which was approved yesterday at 4:30 a.m., is [our proposal lowering a library treasurer bond](#) from 50% to not less than 10% of the total funds received by a library in the previous fiscal year. For various reasons, leadership chose to package this and numerous other stand-alone concepts into one amendment that was considered on the final night of this year's spring session.

The Governor has signed the revenue omnibus, which is effective July 1, 2024. RAILS will work with Ancel Glink to get a memo created for libraries, explaining how they can receive the savings made possible by this change. RAILS submitted this legislative proposal to ILA Public Policy Committee last summer after the discrepancy in the law between libraries and other public agencies was explained at the July LIRA Annual meeting. I want to share my sincere thanks with ILA leadership for advocating for this money saving legislation for libraries.

Other Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the most recent Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee meeting on June 3. Lobbyist Derek highlighted additional bills for the committee that ILA is watching closely:

- [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. This bill was re-referred to Assignments on April 19 and had its third reading deadline established as May 3rd.
- [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 re-referred to the Rules Committee on April 5 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. This bill passed the House on May 21 and has moved to the Senate.

Derek explained that they will continue to monitor these bills in the eight-day fall session. ILA has published a list of the bills they are [monitoring](#) if you have an interest in following these changes.

ILA Leadership and Public Policy Committee is currently soliciting potential legislative proposals from ILA members for FY2025. Proposals are due on August 1, 2024. More on the legislative [proposal process](#) can be found on the ILA website.

FY2025 System Area and Per Capita Grant

The FY2025 System Area and Per Capita was submitted to the Illinois State Library on May 31, 2024.

May ISLAC Meeting

I attended the May 30 Illinois State Library Advisory Council meeting in Springfield. The Partnership for school libraries, which RAILS facilitates, presented findings on the current state of school libraries in Illinois and a robust discussion followed. There was also a demo of the iLead trustee training portal and an update on the Public Library Court Access project. Greg McCormick gave the State Library report, with updates on the FY2025 budget for library and literacy programs, the e-Resources Database package, Open Educational Resources (OER), and the upcoming Sub Committees Appointment Process. The next meeting is scheduled for July 25, 2024.

Illinois State Library Technology Grants

Secretary Giannoulas has awarded \$2 Million in library tech grants to underserved communities across Illinois. The grants, which were publicly announced on June 6, were awarded to 113 public libraries in amounts of either \$12,500 or \$27,500 depending on the size of the community they serve. To qualify, communities must be eligible for updated equalization grant funding (which results from a low tax base) and have a high poverty rate. RAILS and IHLS partnered on a virtual event for grantees on June 12, where representatives from the Illinois State Library provided guidance on the grant process, and libraries could share their ideas for the grant with one another. More, including video of the press event, can be found on the [RAILS website](#).

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

EDI Training for RAILS Supervisory Staff

RAILS held an EDI training specifically for supervisory staff on May 29. The training, that focused on the role that leaders across RAILS have with EDI, as well as discussions around the culture of RAILS, provided a good opportunity for staff learning. This is the first of a new opportunity for training and networking for RAILS supervisors, which we plan to repeat on a quarterly basis.

Digital Accessibility Pulse Page

Hopefully you have had a chance to look at the new Pulse page on [Digital Accessibility](#). This page will receive frequent updates with more information on digital accessibility issues, federal laws and guidance, resources for libraries, continuing education, and related learning opportunities. Included on the Pulse page is a new memo from Ancel Glink regarding Office for Civil Rights' Digital Access Discrimination complaints.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

ISBE Authorized RAILS as a Professional Development Hours (PDH) Provider

RAILS' application to ISBE to become an [Illinois state-approved professional development provider](#) has been accepted. RAILS will issue professional development credit to Illinois licensed educators for license renewal purposes through continuing education opportunities. We hope this will have a big impact on RAILS member school libraries!

June 6 Member Update

Our re-scheduled [June Member Update](#) focused largely on the topic of digital accessibility. Topics covered included a general RAILS news update, a preview of the new Title II web accessibility requirements from Keith Hays, ADA IT Coordinator at the University of Illinois, Urbana-champaign, a preview of the Modern eAccessibility Landscape from Sonya Schryer Norris, and stories from 2023 My Library Is... grant recipients. Special thanks to Antioch Director Jennifer

Drinka, who shared her experience with the group as well. The June member update was recorded and can be found on the [RAILS YouTube channel](#).

June RAILS Minute

The [June RAILS Minute](#) focused on an announcement of the RAILS Board Election, what libraries need to know to be in compliance with Title II, and more about Find More Illinois, our growing interlibrary loan platform. Thanks as always to Ola Gronski for producing this informative monthly podcast.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Dominican University's School of Information Studies (SOIS) Advisory Board

I've been asked to join the Advisory Board for Dominican University's School of Information Studies. The Advisory Board met on June 11 after being newly reformed. I am excited for the opportunity to work with a bright group of library colleagues who are focused on the future of LIS programs in Illinois.

Partnership Advocacy Working Group for Library Partners

The second meeting of the working group for the Partnership focused on talking points in support of a certified school librarian in every school met on Friday, June 7. The group is working together on talking points for two audiences: library partners who'd like to support their school colleagues and community members who would like to support school libraries. [SLATE project](#) data will be incorporated.

Looking Ahead to July

- **Seating new RAILS Board members**
- **July Board Development topics – RAILS Financial Report and Budget**
- **July Board Orientation**
- **FY2025 Board Meeting Calendar**



This Month at RAILS – June 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 & IHLS to Host Digital Equity Grant Co-Design Event

The Illinois Office of Broadband has been conducting co-design workshops with stakeholders as they develop the grant program that will distribute Digital Equity Act funds. They reached out to RAILS and IHLS for support. [Digital Equity Grant Co-Design for Libraries](#) will take place Thursday, July 11. This event is open to library staff with experience facilitating or participating in community programs that serve vulnerable residents.

RAILS Offering 2024 Illinois Library Laws & Rules Book Discount

RAILS is now offering copies of the [2024 Illinois Library Laws & Rules book](#) for member libraries. This essential compilation includes all current laws and rules affecting library service in Illinois. The purchase price of \$25 includes the book and flash drive. The Illinois Library Laws & Rules book is a publication of the Illinois Library Association.

RAILS Member Meetup at Freeport Public Library, 7/17

RAILS will be hosting [a Member Meetup at the Freeport Public Library](#), on Wednesday, July 17 at 10 a.m. RAILS Member Meetups are in-person, multitype library events for members to connect on issues related to the profession. In addition to connecting with other librarians from across the area, there also will be a short presentation on RAILS resources including continuing education, delivery services, and grant opportunities. All library staff from any type of library are invited. Ashley Huffines, Executive Director of the Freeport Public Library, will also be giving a tour.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

May RAILS Site Visits

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva conducted site visits at member libraries in May. She visited:

- American Library Association, Chicago, IL
- Chicago History Museum, Abakanowicz Research Center, Chicago, IL
- Cossitt Avenue School, LaGrange, IL
- Elwood School, Elwood, IL
- Heyworth Elementary, Heyworth, IL
- Instituto Cervantes, Chicago, IL (pictured, right)
- Mundelein High School, Mundelein, IL
- Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL
- Rockland School, Libertyville, IL
- Waldo Middle School, Aurora, IL
- Washington Irving School, Oak Park, IL
- Williamsfield Public Library, Williamsfield, IL



Jessica has many more visits ahead of her! If you are interested in connecting with her, please reach out, jessica.silva@railslibraries.org.

RAILS Films TikTok Video at Oak Park School Library

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva was able to secure a site visit at Washington Irving School in Oak Park, where she and RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski shot TikTok content with school librarian Katie Noonan. These two videos are brief, lighthearted, and have gained a great amount of engagement when linked on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X.

New Digital Equity Networking Group

RAILS will be helping start a new digital equity networking group. The group was created after RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter's presentation at Reaching Forward North conference. RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva will be working with the group to host [their first meeting on July 15](#). Registration is available via L2.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

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

Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power

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

Deals & Discounts Webinars/Demos

The job listing for a second Library Resource Specialist was posted on June 5. This position focuses on the responsibilities, practices and procedures related to the Deals & Discounts program.

Text and Learn for Kindergarten (TALK)

On June 5, Joe Filapek, Monica Harris and Leila Heath met with the Director and staff from Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS), a library consortium serving Indiana and Michigan. They discussed a service MCLS is offering: [Text and Learn for Kindergarten](#) (TALK). TALK is an early learning text messaging service based on [Every Child Ready to Read](#) that helps public libraries connect with underserved parents and caregivers of children 0-5, encourages caregiver-child interactions to support early learning, and suggests easy activities that are appropriate to a child's developmental level and will help prepare them for success in school.

Career Online High School Update

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

During May, scholarships were transferred or purchased for our existing Career Online High School and Gale Excel High School participating libraries.

COHS Stats as of May 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
438	204	97	60%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

RAILS Receives Additional Replacement Delivery Vehicle

In late May RAILS received an additional transit van as part of our planned vehicle replacement purchases during FY24. This transit van was assigned to our Coal Valley delivery fleet and represents the last transit van replacement during the current fiscal year.

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

Find More Illinois Update

The Find More Illinois team continues to on-board new CCS libraries. As of June, the following CCS libraries are officially on-boarded:

- Algonquin Public Library District
- Cary Area Public Library District
- Glencoe Public Library
- Glenview Public Library
- McHenry Public Library District



- Morton Grove Public Library
- Park Ridge Public Library
- Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District

eRead Illinois Update

The eRead Illinois renewal period continued through May. As of June 4, the following libraries have renewed their membership in eRead Illinois:



- 183 public libraries
- 28 academic libraires
- 3 special libraries
- 563 school buildings

This is in addition to the PrairieCat and RSA libraries, which have renewed eRead Illinois as a complete consortium.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
May 2024	21,207	18,976	40,183
FY 2024 To Date	218,622	185,347	403,969

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
May 2024	1,521
FY 2024	19,136

Explore More Illinois Update

In May 2024, 2,277 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in April were:



- Brookfield Zoo (440)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200)
- Volo Museum (34)
- Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford (30)
- DuPage Children’s Museum in Naperville (28)

The most popular Chicago attractions in May 2024 were:

- Art Institute of Chicago (365)
- Museum of Science and Industry (365)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (233)
- Field Museum (220)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (110)

Quad City Botanical Center in Rock Island joined as a new attraction.

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

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
347	93	1	4	445

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of May 31, 2024

Attractions	63
Total Attractions in 2024	70

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in May 2024

Organization	May 2024
RAILS/IHLS	386
CPL	1,891
Total	2,277

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

2024 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium Registration Open

The second annual [Illinois School Library Workers Symposium](#) takes place Wednesday, September 25, 2024 8:30 am - 3 pm. This free event is designed for school library workers with no formal library education, paraprofessionals, and those considering getting a school library endorsement. Applications will be accepted until Friday, August 30, 2024. Attendees will be notified of their selection by Wednesday, September 11, 2024.

2024 Directors University Applications

Applications by new library directors were accepted for participation in the [upcoming 2024 Directors University](#). 30 RAILS directors were accepted to attend the July/August event that will prepare public library directors for their new executive roles. The University will also 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.

Recent CE Events

- **“Race, Human Development, and the Anatomy of an Apology”**, webinar, May 23 & May 30
Join DEI Director Tony Bradburn as he leads us through an interactive, two-session experience that will help us explore race, human development, the psychology of race consciousness, and how organizations can address racism.
- **“Working in the ‘Gray Area’: Boundaries for Library Staff”**, webinar, June 11
Beth Wahler of Beth Wahler Consulting will lead a discussion on common boundary-related challenges for library staff. Participants will leave understanding how to resolve situations that don't have a clear right or wrong outcome.
- **“The Modern eAccessibility Landscape,”** webinar, June 12
Sonya Schryer Norris will provide information on processes and outcomes for eAccessibility complaints made through the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and how to make their libraries less vulnerable to eAccessibility complaints.
- **“Media Literacy in the Age of AI”**, webinar, June 13
Nick Tanzi will give us strategies for identifying AI-generated content and reducing AI hallucinations.
- **“Dice Rollers: Running a D&D Club at Your Library”**, webinar, June 18
Luke Rathburn, Communications Library Associate at Grayslake Area Public Library, presented on how to start and maintain a D&D club at your library.
- **“Employee Onboarding: Don’t Lose Them at Hello”**, webinar, June 20
Back for the second time this year by popular demand, HR Source will talk about the importance of developing employee onboarding and orientation programs, what should be included in them, and effective techniques to engage new employees before they even get in the door.

Upcoming CE Events

- **“Create a Culture Where Everyone Matters with Simon Sinek’s The Optimism Company”**, webinar, June 24
Zach Mercurio from Simon Sinek's The Optimism Company will present on creating a culture where everyone matters. Enabling meaningful work is a skillset that leaders can learn. With changing modes of work, job insecurity, and heightened awareness of social injustice, enabling the experience of meaningfulness is a vital skill for next-generation leaders.
- **“The Facts About Prevailing Wage”**, webinar, July 10
Ancel Glink will help you understand your library’s obligations under the Prevailing Wage Act, including when it applies, what your library must do and when, how to handle past issues with unions, and what to do when the Illinois Department of Labor calls.
- **“Digital Equity Grant Co-Design for Libraries,”** online meeting, July 11
Library staff with experience facilitating or participating in community programs that serve vulnerable residents are invited to contribute to the Illinois Office of Broadband’s Digital Equity Grant Program. Illinois will receive over \$30 million to fund technology programs like device distribution, digital skill building, digital navigation, digital equity coalition building, and more! Help the Office of Broadband learn how they can build the grant program to best serve you, your libraries, and your community.
- **"How to Hug a Porcupine: Dealing with Difficult Patrons and Co-Workers"**, webinar, July 16
Have you ever dealt with a difficult patron or co-worker? Join Dr. Debbie Joffe Ellis, adjunct professor at Columbia University, for this webinar highlighting main lessons from *How to Hug a Porcupine!* Attention will be given to the importance of developing and maintaining unconditional acceptance of ourselves, others, and life, and the "how-to's" of doing so.
- **“Crisis Communications for Library Staff,”** RAILS Burr Ridge, July 18
More information and registration details will be in the L2 calendar soon.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

June 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.

May meeting topics included:

- Collaborative work on an FAQ for school libraries for Public Act 103-0100
- Updates on the AISLE Task Force for Certified School Librarians in Every School
- A meeting of the recent Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) which discussed school library advocacy

And much more! We will continue to keep the board updated on these meetings.

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

RAILS Social Media Features Staff Pets

On behalf of the RAILS Staff Engagement Committee, RAILS Data Analysis Manager Grant Halter and RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Coordinator Ola Gronski collected information from RAILS staff about their pets. They used that information to make graphics and sent them out in daily batches for National Pet Week. At the end of the week, a select few were shared on social media—surprising no one, the animals were a hit both internally and externally.

Digital Equity Act Grant Feedback

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter was asked to provide feedback to the ALA Washington Office on in-progress edits to the documents provide guidance for libraries about leveraging their state's upcoming Digital Equity Act Grant programs.



Anne Slaughter Presents at Several Conferences on Digital Equity

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter presented about digital equity and libraries at the following conferences in May:

- Illinois Connected Summit (May 9)
- Reaching Forward North (May 10)
- Code4Lib (May 16)



Anne is also presenting on a panel at 2024 ALA Annual Conference: “Level Up Your Digital Equity Efforts with Federal Internet for All Funding”, Saturday, June 29, 11:00 p.m. – 12:00 p.m. Anne is picture above with co-presenter Hillary Rains from the Illinois Office of Broadband at the Reaching Forward North conference.

RAILS IT Update

RAILS IT recently completed a transition to a new file server. RAILS also has a new email signature software provider, Exclaimer. This was deployed earlier in 2024. IT also has a new security suite provider, CrowdStrike. This service offers protection against cyberattacks. New firewalls were recently delivered, and IT is finishing up the transition plan to this new hardware. RAILS will also be moving to a new Virtual Private Network (VPN) for remote access to our network. Staff were also upgraded to Windows 11 recently.

RAILS Facilities Update

Tuckpointing work at our Burr Ridge Service Center was completed on June 7. This project focused on the west side of our facility and covered approximately 200 square feet. This work was recommended as a component of our Capital Needs Assessment created by Building Technology Consultants (BTC). A bathroom renovation project was completed in early June at our Coal Valley Service Center.

MAY 2024: analytics

● Facebook

● Instagram

● Twitter

● LinkedIn

followers



April 2024

May 2024

2,484

2,494

1,404

1,420

1,435

1,440

1,487

1,534

reach



April 2024

May 2024

12,238

8,529

1,303

1,108

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

impressions



April 2024

May 2024

N/A

N/A

6,408

5,298

2,000

2,449

7,133

9,074

engagement



April 2024

May 2024

2,400

1,945

527

355

N/A

N/A

193

184

MAY 2024: top posts

