



125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
630.734.5000
railslibraries.org

Executive Director Report, August 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

RAILS Member Update is Coming on September 4th

We hope you can join us for RAILS Member Update on September 4th at 3pm. The meeting will focus on a presentation from Greg McCormick and Suzanna Jones from the Illinois State Library about the Statewide e-Resource Package, a report on how libraries of all types can advocate for school libraries from AISLE Executive Secretary Carolyn Kinsella, and an overview of the Agencies of Impact data report from RAILS' Janette Derucki.

Illinois Legislative Updates

The FY2025 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee (PPC) met on August 5 to review legislative proposals received by that committee. RAILS submitted a joint proposal with IHLS on better access to the internet for libraries that would align them with what is made available to schools in Illinois. PPC asked for the proposal to be combined with a similar proposal that was received by the committee, and Anne Slaughter of RAILS and Troy Brown of IHLS have agreed to work on combining the proposals. This should come back before the committee at our next meeting on August 26. I have also volunteered to participate in a new subcommittee that will evaluate other legislative asks from other units of government to identify future opportunities for Illinois libraries.

Site Visits to RAILS Board Member Libraries

I've been able to visit RAILS Board members at Byron Public Library, Frankfort Public Library, and Clarendon Hills Public Library this month. Thank you so much for the tours, hospitality, and thoughtful conversations about what you hope to receive from your RAILS Board experience. I'm looking forward to a visit to the Homewood Public Library soon! If any of you would like me to come for site visit, let Emily know and we would be happy to arrange it whenever it is convenient for you.

Evaluating Delivery Options

RAILS has recently received a series of quotes from our outsourced delivery and sorting provider, CTS, related to an upcoming contract renewal. We are currently evaluating the options presented and will share more during our delivery presentation in September.

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

Climate Team

The RAILS Climate Team resumed meeting in August after a brief pause over the summer months. Topics discussed included details of an upcoming staff survey related to learning around EDI principles and discussion of how to eventually move from being facilitated by an outside subject expert to a self-governed climate team.

IMLS Grant with Dominican University Selected for Funding

Dominican University's IMLS grant (on which we are partners) for *Exploring User-Informed Approaches to Enhancing Library Metadata for the LBGTQ+ Community* has been selected for funding. We look forward to supporting them as a partner in the project.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Continuing Education (CE) Event Grants

We've just launched our next grant initiative available to RAILS member libraries through continuing education. RAILS members can shape future professional development opportunities by applying for up to \$2000 in funding per grant to support continuing education initiatives for library workers and trustees. While we prioritize CE events centered around equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility we're open to applications covering topics that benefit our library communities. There are two deadlines for FY2025: October 1 and February 3. You can find out more and apply at the [CE Event Grants](#) web page.

Agencies of Impact Report

As I know you are all aware, a lot of planning went into the Agencies of Impact data report that Janette Derucki will present on at the August meeting. One of our strategic plan goals is to help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value to their various stakeholders. We hope this report can be one more advocacy tool as they tell their library story to their communities. You can access an online and accessible version of [Agencies of Impact](#) on the My Library Is.. website, and we will be sending print copies to member libraries soon. Looking forward to your ideas about how we can continue to help libraries to demonstrate their value. We will also present on the report at the ILA Annual conference in October.

Statewide e-Resource Package

The Illinois State Library has sent communications to RAILS member libraries detailing the steps they should take to ensure access to the statewide e-resource package. This includes details of what is in the e-resource package, how to get access, and why libraries should take the time to get access set up. As reported earlier, the ISL will also present on this topic at our September Member Update.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

iCamp (Illinois Cataloging Mentorship Program) Launches

A new year-long initiative designed to support all levels of current and aspiring cataloging staff launched at the end of July. Over twelve months participants will engage in monthly meetings between new professionals and seasoned mentors focused on connection, goal setting, and shared expectations. The program emphasizes the advancement of cataloging skills, networking opportunities, and the establishment of lasting professional relationships. This program is the result of a partnership between RAILS and the Illinois Heartland Library System.

Directors University

I had the opportunity to attend one day of the 8th Annual Directors University (July 30-Aug 1) in Bloomington, Illinois. Directors University is a professional development opportunity intended for first-time library directors and directors new to Illinois from public libraries of all shapes and sizes. I gave a joint presentation with IHLS Executive Director Leslie Bednar on understanding the value of the library systems, and helping library directors understand what they could get from system support. This program, co-sponsored by IHLS, the Illinois Library Association, the Illinois State Library, and RAILS, continues to be a very important opportunity for ensuring well trained library support across Illinois.

Illinois School Library Workers Symposium on September 25

We invite school library staff to join us for the 2nd annual Illinois School Library Workers Symposium on September 25, from 8:30am to 3pm. This is a full day of online training for school library workers provided by RAILS, AISLE, ILA, and IHLS at no cost to individuals or school districts. Applications to attend are being accepted through August 30.

Free People Read Freely: Literacy, Inclusion and Democracy on August 20-21

CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) will host a Symposium August 20-21 that will feature speakers and panel discussions on topics including book banning, censorship, and the importance of reading and books to foster public dialogue. RAILS will have an information table at this event and Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek will represent RAILS throughout the event.

Looking Ahead to September

- **We hope you can join us for an offsite Board meeting at the Bloomington Public Library for our September meeting. We will also host a networking meeting for area library workers before the meeting. More details coming soon!**
- **September Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS Delivery Update with Mark Hatch and Overview of the Illinois Library Association with Executive Director Cyndi Robinson**



This Month at RAILS – August 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:

Three New Deals for RAILS School Libraries

The RAILS Deals & Discounts team recently announced three new deals for school libraries: JSTOR/ARTSTOR, LOTE4 Kids and Era Books Online deals are now published on the RAILS Deals & Discounts page. This Fall, vendors will present informational webinars to highlight the benefits and value of these resources for schools. Watch the RAILS Deals & Discounts page and the RAILS E-News for dates and times.

RAILS Member Meetup at Freeport Public Library

On Wednesday, July 17, RAILS held a Member Meetup event at the Freeport Public Library. This event was an opportunity for staff from all types of member libraries to learn more about RAILS resources and do networking. RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva organized the event. 12 people attended.

RAILS Continuing Education Grants Now Open

RAILS recently announced the opening of Continuing Education (CE) Event Grants for Fall 2024. Interested applicants should submit their proposals by October 1 for events happening between November 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025. CE Event Grants award up to \$2,000 to libraries, networking groups, and library consortia to design and deliver their own CE events. Registration for these events will be open to all RAILS members.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

July RAILS Site Visits

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

- Casa Italia Italian Cultural Center, Stone Park, IL
- East-West University, Chicago, IL
- Engineering Systems, Inc., Aurora, IL
- Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, Chicago, IL
- Hanover Township Public Library, Hanover, IL
- Lanark Public Library, Lanark, IL
- Stockton Township Public Library, Stockton, IL
- Warren Township Public Library, Warren, IL (pictured right)
- Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan, IL
- York Township Public Library, Thomson, IL



Conveners Club Meeting

On Tuesday, August 6, Jessica Silva hosted the first-ever Conveners Club networking group meeting. This event was an opportunity for conveners of networking groups to share best practices and resources, including a new networking group checklist. RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff participated as well and shared news about the RAILS Continuing Education Event Grant. Over 40 people attended.

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our July 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

On July 17, Jody Rubel hosted a webinar for one of the newest Deals & Discounts offers, ComicsPlus. The webinar attracted 23 registrants where library staff learned more about the resource and collections. The engaged attendees asked many questions during the webinar. The recording can be found on the RAILS Deals & Discounts page.

Much of the early part of July was spent on preparing the invoice details for hundreds of libraries participating in the July 1 subscription renewals. Leila Heath, Deb Mitchener, Kim Perry, Jody Rubel, and Sharon Swanson worked together to expedite the process.

Online High School Programs

RAILS offers two online high school programs for libraries: Career Online High School (implemented Spring 2016) and Gale Excel (implemented Spring 2024). Stats for both programs are listed below:

Career Online High School Stats as of July 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
445	217	82	61%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of July 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
9	2	7	100%/53%

Seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services

RAILS Receives Additional Delivery Truck

RAILS received an additional delivery truck at the Bolingbrook facility. RAILS has received 12 of the 13 vehicles budgeted for in FY24. RAILS expects to receive the final vehicle in the very near future.

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

Find More Illinois Update

Through the month of July, RAILS Technology Special Projects Coordinator Eric Bain conducted three in-person trainings as part of FMI onboarding. Additionally, RAILS Consortial Services Supervisor Barb Miller and Eric Bain met with CCS administrators on two occasions to discuss onboarding feedback and address CCS library specific topics.



Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist Ola Gronski is working on gathering video testimonial from RAILS member libraries about Find More Illinois for a promo that will be released in the fall. So far, Ola has scheduled filming sessions at five participating libraries. Jessica Silva will join her during these sessions to provide a site visit opportunity to our members.

Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of July 31, 2024

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	51	8	1	61

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

eRead Illinois renewals concluded in July and all member libraries were invoiced for their FY25 subscription. 100% of eRead Illinois member library membership fees go directly to purchasing materials for the eRead Illinois collection. In FY24, we added over 13,500 e-books and audiobooks.



RAILS staff are working on a package of promotional materials that will be sent to all participating eRead Illinois libraries. This will arrive in the coming weeks.

The eRead Illinois newsletter went out in July. This newsletter goes out quarterly to eRead Illinois member libraries and includes helpful reminders and tips. This most recent edition gave libraries an update about the eRead Illinois renewal process, a link to the YouTube video for RAILS Data Intern Quinn McKissock’s presentation about eRead Illinois data, and links to helpful resources. The next eRead Illinois newsletter will be sent in October.

Far and away the most popular module of the Inkie.org Library this month were the RAILS Community Collections. These collections include materials that RAILS library have created and contributed to the Inkie.org Library. Examples of community collections include community recipe collections, high school yearbooks, and historical photograph collections. In July, RAILS Community Collections account for 1,600 of the 1,900 views of the Inkie.org Library.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
July 2024	16,597	18,535	35,132
Fiscal Year to Date	16,597	18,535	35,132

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
July 2024	1,900
Fiscal Year to Date	1,900

Explore More Illinois Update

In July 2024, 2,528 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in July were:

- Brookfield Zoo (500)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (200)
- Glencoe Beach (45)
- Volo Museum (43)
- DuPage Children’s Museum (40)



The most popular Chicago attractions in July 2024 were:

- Museum of Science and Industry (443)
- Art Institute of Chicago (310)

- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (223)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (212)
- Field Museum (211)

New attractions this month are the Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra, The Forge: Lemont Quarries, The Doudna Fine Arts Center, and Cantigny.

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

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

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of July 31, 2024

Attractions	64
Total Attractions in 2024	76

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in July 2024

Organization	July 2024
RAILS/IHLS	530
CPL	2,098
Total	2,628

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

Providing resources that will support member libraries’ efforts to provide EDI services

RAILS Partners in Dominican University IMLS Grant Project

Dominican University's School of Information Studies, along with two other library schools, was recently awarded a 2024 National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The title of their grant project is [Exploring User-Informed Approaches to Enhancing Library Metadata for the LGBTQ+ Community](#). This grant project will examine how adult LGBTQ+ library users understand and make use of the library catalog and how metadata might be improved to reflect the needs of these users. As a grant partner, RAILS will support this project by promoting opportunities for member libraries to recruit users from their community to participate in user studies and focus groups.

Examine all aspects of RAILS policies, procedures, and core services through an equity lens

RAILS Climate Team

The RAILS Climate Team will meet in August to develop goals for Fiscal Year 2025; and begin work on a video that outlines RAILS' commitment to creating equitable policies, procedures and core services, to be used for new RAILS employees as they join the organization.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

Directors University Celebrates Eight Years!

The eighth annual Directors University was held July 30 – August 1 in Bloomington-Normal, IL. 28 RAILS member library directors attended, including those from the following libraries:

- Atlanta Public Library District
- Cambridge Public Library District
- Chatsworth Area Library
- Deer Creek District Library
- East Moline Public Library
- Ela Area Public Library District
- Eureka Public Library District
- Evanston Public Library
- Fox River Valley Public Library District
- Four Star Public Library District
- Franklin Park Public Library District
- Highwood Library & Community Center
- Homer Township Public Library District
- Illinois Prairie District Public Library
- Mount Carroll District Library
- Nippersink Public Library District
- Oregon Public Library District



- Palos Park Public Library, Peru Public Library
- Phoenix Public Library
- Prairie Creek Public Library District
- Riverdale Public Library District
- River Valley District Library
- Steger-South Chicago Heights Public Library
- Stockton Township Public Library
- Tiskilwa Public Library
- Towanda District Library
- Town and Country Public Library District

HR Source Renewals

The CE & Consulting team has been actively renewing libraries' membership in the HR Source Discount program for libraries with operating budgets under \$1 million. Four new libraries signed on in July 2024 for a total of 72 libraries. Libraries can continue to join and renew their memberships for a prorated cost.

Recent CE Events

- **"Making Your Website More Accessible"**, webinar, July 24
In this introductory webinar, Laura Solomon briefly discussed the legal landscape, and then broke down some concrete actions and changes you can make to your website's content now to make it

more accessible in the short term. In this webinar participants learned what “web accessibility” covers, understood which legal standards apply to library websites, and took away at least three changes that can be made to make a website more accessible to people with disabilities.

- **“A Day in the Life of a Special Librarian”**, webinar, July 30
Colby Maddox, Resource Center Manager at Old Town School of Folk Music, gave a brief history of Old Town School of Folk Music and its Resource Center, the Resource Center’s catalog conversion, approaches to shelf arrangement, balancing archival needs with the needs of the library, revenue streams that fit a special library, and more.
- **“Increasing Digital Health & Equity Through Telehealth”**, webinar series, August 1
In this two-part series, Heartland Forward used their experience collaborating with The Public Library Association to create [Getting Started with Telehealth](#), a new training module available on [DigitalLearn.org](#), to give an overview of telehealth services and taught participants how to use the training module to help their patrons.
- **“Budgeting in Tough Times for Small Libraries”**, webinar, August 6
This webinar was designed for small library directors and board members seeking to enhance their financial strategies. They learned crucial topics such as budget optimization, maximizing levy revenue, effective cost management, and more.
- **“Project Management for the Rest of Us”**, Mount Prospect Public Library, August 7
Early- to mid-level library professionals learned the key components of project management including how to start, planning essentials, execution, and closure, and how to communicate with management and stakeholders throughout the process.

Upcoming CE Events

- **“PR 101 for Library Trustees: Leading Through Crisis”**, webinar, August 24
Gain and stay in control of the narrative during challenging times. Melanie Santostefano, founder and President of St. Steven Public Relations and Vicarious Multimedia, will teach you the dos and don’ts of using social media as a library trustee; the mutually beneficial relationship with the news media and how to nurture it; best practices for news media interactions to stay in control of messaging; putting the “United Front Communications” Principle into practice; and best practices for overall communications, including trustee/organization staff member participation, and utilization of all communications channels available.
- **“Creating Accessible PDFs”**, webinar, August 28
Even if a library has been focusing on making its website more accessible, PDF files that patrons download are often overlooked. PDF documents are not inherently accessible and require specific effort to make them accessible. In this session, learn concrete actions you can take to make your library’s PDF content accessible.
- **“Public Libraries as Gateways to Nature”**, webinar, September 9
More information and registration information will be available in L2 soon.
- **“Generative AI Tools for Creating Multimedia”**, webinar, September 10
In this tour of multimedia generative AI tools, you’ll be introduced to the underlying technology that allows images to be created from simple text inputs. You’ll see demonstrations of tools for creating images, video, speech, and music, and examples of what these tools can generate. We’ll discuss the ethical issues around training data, and the problem of “deepfakes.” Finally, we’ll offer ideas for how to use these tools for educational purposes.
- **“Advancing Accessibility in Your Library”**, webinar, September 16
Learn steps you can take to meet legal requirements and develop a library culture that prioritizes accessibility. Katie Myers, ADA Coordinator at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, will share

AHML's ongoing efforts, discuss lessons learned, and provide practical advice that can help you get started identifying regional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and community resources that provide partnership, collaboration and training. Learn strategies for building inclusion awareness in your organization and how to expand the conversation with your community.

- **“Book Repair Workshop”**, White Oak Library District: Romeoville Branch, September 16
More information and registration information will be available in L2 soon.
- **“Sustainable and Inclusive Library Practices”**, webinar, September 23
More information and registration information will be available in L2 soon.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

L2 Governance Group Meeting

The L2 Governance Group (L2G2), the statewide advisory group for the L2 platform met on Monday, August 5. Topics at the event included:

- Feature development
- Creating procedures for quality control testing
- Support documentation

A subgroup of L2G2 members is working to update existing support documentation, identify and prioritize documentation needs, and create new documentation.

RAILS and IHLS Partnering on Legislative Proposal

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter is working closely with Troy Brown, Information Technology Director at the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) to develop a legislative proposal in connection to broadband access for libraries. Anne and Troy will present the proposal at the next Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee meeting in August.

FY26 LLSAP Support Grant Applications Available

Applications are now available for the FY26 LLSAP Support Grants. These grants support the six LLSAP shared catalog consortia in the RAILS service area: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RRLC, RSA, and SWAN. Applications are due in mid-September and awards will be announced in late October. Reports on their use of FY24 LLSAP Support Grants are included in the meeting packet.

August Partnership Meeting

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.

June meeting topics included:

- Updates on the AISLE Task Force for Certified School Librarians in Every School
- Discussion of a joint booth at the 2024 Illinois Association of School Boards conference in November

- A discussion of creating a new website for the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium

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

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Joe Filapek Participates in Ribbon Cutting at Bloomington Public Library

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Bloomington Public Library's expansion on Thursday, August 1. Bloomington Public Library Director Jeanne Hamilton (left) and BPL Board Trustees (and RAILS Board of Director) Dianne Hollister (right) are pictured with Joe Filapek.

Anne Slaughter to Serve as Panelist in Upcoming PLA Webinar

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter was invited to be a panelist in an upcoming PLA webinar, [Expand Library Digital Equity Services with New Funds Now!](#) on Wednesday, September 4, 1-2 pm Central. This event will feature a discussion of funding opportunities and actional information for libraries around digital equity. The event is free and open for registration.



RAILS Staff Present at Illinois State University

RAILS Member Engagement Manager Jessica Silva and RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki both gave presentations for the Library Information Specialist endorsement program at Illinois State University. Janette Derucki spoke on big data, data tools, and data-driven decision making in school libraries. Jessica Silva spoke about RAILS, RAILS resources, and how school libraries can get more involved in RAILS.

Jessica Silva Featured in Gerber/Hart TikTok

RAILS member Gerber/Hart Library and Archives [tagged us in a video](#) featuring Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva. In the video, various staff members do the macarena in different parts of the library. Jessica was conducting a site visit at the time and was asked to join in on the fun.

Illinois Cataloging Services Receives Acclaim at ALA Annual Conference

The strong statewide work of Illinois' cataloging training program was lauded at the 2024 ALA Annual Conference. At the Core Competencies and Education for a Career in Cataloging Interest Group meeting, it was noted that the state of Illinois stands apart in regard to hands-on training and practice. Much of this is due to the work of catalogers at RAILS and IHLS. RAILS Cataloging Services Manager Nincy George's cataloging courses are always full and include a healthy waiting list. This was noted in the [July 2024 issue of the PrairieCat eNewsletter](#). Kudos Nincy!





JULY 2024: analytics



FOLLOWERS

June 2024

July 2024





 Facebook	2,504	2,513
 Instagram	1,426	1,445
 Twitter/X	1,451	1,447
 LinkedIn	1,573	1,605



REACH

June 2024

July 2024





 Facebook	6,676	4,196
 Instagram	1,702	904
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	N/A	N/A



IMPRESSIONS

June 2024

July 2024





 Facebook	N/A	N/A
 Instagram	5,423	3,547
 Twitter/X	1,725	N/A
 LinkedIn	6,860	4,544



ENGAGEMENT

June 2024

July 2024

 Facebook	1,424	1,373
 Instagram	413	313
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	323	176

JULY 2024: top posts

