



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

Executive Director Report, September 2024

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Welcome Maggie Thomann to RAILS

I'm pleased to introduce the newest member of the RAILS team, Library Resource Specialist Maggie Thomann. Maggie has more than 20 years of experience in Illinois libraries, and has also served on the Digital Library of Illinois Executive Board, Adult Reading Roundtable steering committee, and the ILA iRead, Conference, and award committees. As the Library Resource Specialist Maggie will help identify quality products and services for RAILS member libraries, maintain and analyze data related to purchasing, and process finalized deals. Please join me in welcoming Maggie!

Anne Slaughter Named DCEO Broadband Advisory Council Chair

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has announced that RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter has been appointed the new Broadband Advisory Council Chair. Anne has been representing libraries on the Council since its inception in 2019. This is a wonderful opportunity for Anne and a great opportunity to continue her work in making libraries a visible part of digital inclusion and broadband efforts. Congratulations on this honor, Anne!

Illinois Legislative Updates

ILA's Public Policy Committee met on August 26. The group approved legislative priorities for 2024-2025 for recommendation to the ILA Executive Board. The priorities were Considering Equitable Compensation Reporting Requirements (related to the requirement for posting salary information for any employer of an IMRF participating organization for any employee making over \$75k) and Libraries Connected (Related to providing complimentary internet service to libraries in their role as community anchor institutions; RAILS co-sponsored this proposal). There was also a discussion of creating a subcommittee investigating proposed changes to the Open Meetings Act and a task force that could be dedicated to modernizing Illinois Records Retention.

RAILS Minute

This month's RAILS Minute focused on promotion of Illinois Libraries: Agencies of Impact, the premiere of our new podcast for school library workers, and more updates on the statewide e-resource package. The RAILS Minute continues to be a succinct but informative way to share what's happening at RAILS each month with members.

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

Freedom Lifted Renewal

RAILS has signed an agreement to continue providing Freedom Lifted's [Social Justice in Public Libraries](#) to all RAILS member libraries. This asynchronous learning opportunity can be an important part of member library's efforts towards providing better understanding of principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in libraries. The new contract will extend access to this valuable program until September 2025.

EDIA Forum

As mentioned at our August meeting, RAILS staff are in the process of developing a forum for members interested in further discussion around the issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in libraries. We anticipate an announcement of this new opportunity for RAILS members interested in this work in Fall 2024.

IMLS Grant Opportunity

RAILS has committed support to the IMLS funded [iLead: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders with an EDI Lens](#). The initiative, which is designed as a no-cost, open-access national leadership program has a focus on inclusive leadership. We are serving as part of a coalition including Chicago Public Library and the Illinois Library Association, as well as many other national partners in the event that the next stage of this project is funded by IMLS. I believe this project has the potential to make a positive impact in the library community, and I hope there will be more to share soon.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Agencies of Impact Report Featured on WBEZ

RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki was interviewed for WBEZ 91.5 for a short segment on the value of libraries and the Agencies of Impact Report. The interview, which ran on September 10th was also picked up by other public radio stations in Illinois that week. We continue to hope that this advocacy piece has strong impact on helping libraries to tell their stories to their communities.

Statewide e-Resource Package

The Illinois State Library's Greg McCormick and Suzanna Jones presented on the Statewide e-Resource package at the RAILS Member Update on September 4. The recording is now available on the RAILS YouTube page. The Illinois State Library is also hosting a series of training sessions through September 25, and virtual office hours for libraries through October, November, and December.

New Podcast for School Library Workers

RAILS has launched a new podcast for school library workers: [Can't Shelve This](#). This series is cohosted by RAILS Data Specialist Janette Derucki and Illinois Heartland Library System School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory. We're hoping that this monthly, hour-long format is a good fit for all of our members – it's a great way for school library workers to connect but also a real glimpse into the life of school libraries for other library supporters. Let us know what you think of the podcast, and feel free to share!

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Western Illinois University and Advocacy for Academic Libraries

We continued with conversations with our library partners this month on how we could be supportive of librarians at Western Illinois University in light of the cuts. CARLI Governance Board approved a statement in support of academic libraries which was reviewed by the RAILS Board Advocacy committee at their September 19th meeting. We will discuss the statement and potential RAILS Board support at the September meeting.

ISLAC and ILDS Contract

I will be in Springfield next week (September 25 & 26) to attend the ISLAC (Illinois State Library Advisory Council) meeting and discuss the upcoming ILDS contract with Greg McCormick, Anne Craig, and Leslie Bednar. I hope to have more to report at the September meeting.

ILA Library Legislative Meetups

ILA has announced the dates for their upcoming series of [legislative meetings](#). This is a great opportunity to meet directly with legislators and advocate for the issues important to Illinois libraries. The meetings covering RAILS areas of service are: Alsip (Dec 3), Oak Brook (Dec 3), Northbrook (Dec 4), Normal (Dec 10), and DeKalb (Dec 10). If you have an interest in attending on behalf of RAILS, please let Emily or myself know. ILA Executive Director Cyndi Robinson will join us at the September meeting and will share more information as well.

Looking Ahead to September

- **October Service of the Month and Board Development Topics: Deals and Discounts with RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and Legal Practices for Boards Around Social Media with Julie Tappendorf**



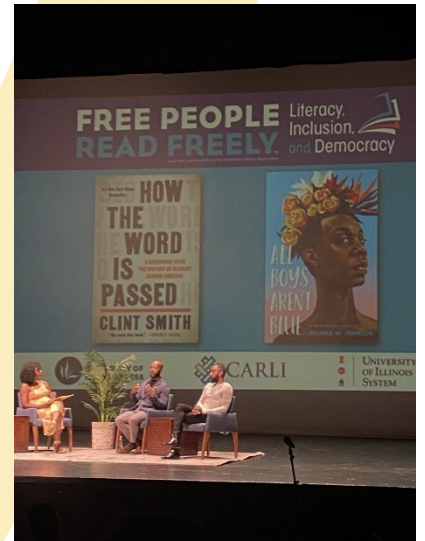
This Month at RAILS – September 2024

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:

Joe Filapek and Jessica Silva Attend *Free People Read Freely* Event

RAILS Associate Executive Director Joe Filapek and Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva attended the *Free People Read Freely* symposium hosted by the University of Illinois System August 20-21 (pictured, right). This event featured speakers and panel discussions focused on book banning, censorship and literacy. RAILS hosted a booth alongside CARLI, IHLS and ILA and had the opportunity to interact with a number of our members during the two-day event.



Two New Exciting Deals & Discounts for Member Libraries

The RAILS Deals & Discounts team recently announced two new deals. Advantageous pricing is available for *Library Journal* Professional Development Courses for all library types. These online courses are designed to provide practical, actionable skills that can be applied directly to library work. New, deeper discounted pricings is now available for Gale Presents: UdeMy for public libraries. This online learning platform provides over 27,000 courses for adults who want to upskill for a new job, advance in their current profession, or deepen a personal interest. More information can be found on the RAILS Deals & Discounts page. This Fall, vendors will present informational webinars to highlight the benefits and value of these resources. Watch the RAILS Deals & Discounts page and the RAILS E-News for dates and times.

RAILS Member Libraries Mentioned on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*

The Late Show with Stephen Colbert mentioned the Yorkville Public Library and Oak Park Public Library during a segment called "[Chicago's Community Calendar with Sean Hayes](#)" on August 16. During the segment, Colbert and Hayes poke light fun at upcoming events in the greater Chicagoland area and mention Yorkville's Read with Paws program and Oak Park's World Peace program.

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices

August RAILS Site Visits

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva conducted 16 site visits at member libraries in August. She visited:

- A-C Central CUSD #262, Ashland, IL
- Bloomington Public Library, Bloomington, IL
- Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge, IL
- Carl Sandburg College, Galesburg, IL
- Delavan CUSD #703, Delavan, IL
- Greig Memorial Library, Oneida, IL
- Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton, IL
- Helen Plum Library, Lombard, IL
- Illinois School for the Visually Impaired, Jacksonville, IL
- Knoxville CUSD #202, Knoxville, IL
- Normal Public Library, Normal, IL
- Old Town School of Folk Music, Chicago, IL (pictured, right)
- Parlin Ingersoll Public Library, Canton, IL
- Triopia CUSD #27, Concord, IL
- University High School Library, Normal, IL
- Village of Avon Public Library, Avon, IL



In-Service Presentations at McHenry and Fountaindale Libraries

Jessica Silva and Dan Bostrom gave presentations to library workers at two recent staff in-service days. Dan Bostrom gave a presentation on RAILS resources at the Fountaindale Public Library District in Bolingbrook, IL on Friday, August 2. Approximately 100 people attended. Jessica Silva gave a presentation on RAILS resources at the McHenry Public Library in McHenry, IL on Friday, August 23. Approximately 30 people attended.

RAILS Hosts First Conveners Club Meeting

On Tuesday, August 6, RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva and RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff held the first-ever Conveners Club meeting. This group is designed to meet the needs of conveners of RAILS networking groups. 11 people participated.

RAILS Gets “Very Cutesy, Very Demure”

RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski and Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva visited Vernon Hills High School where they [filmed a TikTok](#) with RAILS Board member Monica Caldicott. In the video, they play on the viral “very cutesy, very demure” audio trend while walking through the school library.

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](#).

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 August 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
456	192	81	63%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of August 31, 2024

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
10	2	8	100%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

Through the month of August, RAILS Technology Special Projects Coordinator Eric Bain conducted one in-person and one remote training as part of FMI onboarding. He also presented at a CCS member meeting. RAILS Consortial Services Supervisor Barb Miller conducted one remote overview of FMI and answered questions for a school library. She also met with library staff in-person at an academic library to discuss FMI.



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

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
1	70	9	1	81

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
August 2024	1,388
Fiscal Year to Date	3,549

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
August 2024	7,456,516

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

The new eRead Illinois Boundless promotional materials were packed up and sent to eRead Illinois member libraries at the end of August and beginning of September. Each member library received a large poster, two small posters, an info card for staff, and stickers to help eRead Illinois member libraries promote eRead Illinois to their users. Kudos to Nicole Zimmermann for designing and printing the materials, and Karen Goyer for packing and managing the logistics of sending almost 900 (!) promotional kits to libraries.



Anna Behm worked with the team at BiblioBoard to add 50 additional Indie Author Project (IAP) titles to add to the eRead Illinois collection. IAP titles are self-published e-books that are vetted by Library Journal. Titles that are accepted into the IAP collection are made available to readers via libraries across the country. RAILS makes the IAP submission portal available to everyone on Illinois via inkie.org.

Use of RAILS E-Resources

eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
August 2024	19,947	19,812	39,759
Fiscal Year to Date	36,544	38,347	74,891

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
August 2024	1,489
Fiscal Year to Date	3,389

Explore More Illinois Update

In August 2024, 3,594 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 (199)
- Glencoe Beach (93)
- Volo Museum (68)
- DuPage Children's Museum (64)



The most popular Chicago attractions in August 2024 were:

- Art Institute of Chicago (567)
- Museum of Science and Industry (520)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (384)

- Field Museum (353)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (284)

In August, the DuPage Symphony Orchestra in Naperville restarted its offer in Explore More Illinois for the 2024-25 season.

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

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

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of August 31, 2024

Attractions	64
Total Attractions in 2024	76

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in August 2024

Organization	August 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

Social Justice in Public Libraries Renewed for a Second Year

RAILS contracted with Freedom Lifted for a second year to give members access to the Social Justice in Public Libraries portal. In the past year, this portal has given access to comprehensive, self-paced training on EDI and social justice issues to almost 250 member-library staff.



Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

Recent CE Events

- **“PR 101 for Library Trustees: Leading Through Crisis,”** webinar, August 24
Melanie Santostefano, founder and President of St. Steven Public Relations and Vicarious Multimedia, taught 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, participants learned concrete actions they can take to make their libraries' PDF content accessible.
- **“Public Libraries as Gateways to Nature,”** webinar, September 9
This event featured renowned author Richard Louv, whose groundbreaking book *Last Child in the Woods* has transformed our understanding of nature-deficit disorder. In addition, we heard from Westchester Public Library (IL) on delivering nature programming on a tight budget, and Anythink Libraries (CO) about their exciting initiative to create a dedicated Nature Library branch focused on immersive nature-based learning. All three speakers explored and demonstrated the vital role libraries can play in nurturing a deeper connection to nature.
- **“Generative AI Tools for Creating Multimedia,”** webinar, September 10
In this tour of multimedia generative AI tools, attendees were introduced to the underlying technology that allows images to be created from simple text inputs. They saw demonstrations of tools for creating images, video, speech, and music, and examples of what these tools can generate. They also discussed the ethical issues around training data, the problem of “deepfakes,” and ideas for how to use these tools for educational purposes.
- **“Advancing Accessibility in Your Library,”** webinar, September 16
Attendees learned steps they can take to meet legal requirements and develop a library culture that prioritizes accessibility. Katie Myers, ADA Coordinator at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, shared AHML's ongoing efforts, discussed lessons learned, and provided practical advice that can help attendees get started identifying regional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and community resources that provide partnership, collaboration, and training.
- **“Book Repair Workshop,”** White Oak Library District: Romeoville Branch, September 16
This hands-on book repair workshop helped attendees learn when to withdraw a book and when it can be repaired, and what supplies and techniques are most efficient for book repair.
- **“Sustainable and Inclusive Library Practices,”** webinar, September 23
Attendees learned how the Sustainable Libraries Initiative's Sustainable Libraries Certification Program (SLCP) helps libraries enhance their commitment to environmental, economic, and social sustainability. A panel of experienced library leaders who have successfully navigated the certification process and are seeing the rewards of their efforts in areas like energy, waste management, and community resilience presented on their favorite programs, resources, and key lessons learned. Attendees left with practical insights on replicating these successes, participating in similar processes, and finding support for their own sustainability initiatives.

Upcoming CE Events

- **“Copyright, Text Mining, and AI,”** webinar, October 2
This workshop will provide an overview of the legal considerations for researchers, creatives, and professionals navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of AI. Participants will learn about ownership, fair use, and legal obligations when using copyrighted material to build AI tools and when incorporating AI into their work. The workshop will discuss how AI is shaping the academic publishing landscape, particularly its impact on text mining for research purposes.
- **“Collection Management for Today’s School Library,”** webinar, October 22
Kelly Burns Davis will teach the basics of how your community uses your collection and how you can assess it to ensure it’s as effective as possible. You’ll learn how to develop a diverse collection that stays on top of current trends and includes materials that will be in high demand among your students. You’ll also gain ideas for making your collection accessible and inviting to your school community. You’ll walk away with strategies for managing your collection budget and for funding the purchase of new materials.
- **“Mental Health First Aid Training,”** RAILS Burr Ridge, October 23
The National Alliance on Mental Health will teach you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to patrons who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. Details and registration will be available in L2 soon.
- **“Amanda Jones, ‘That Librarian’ and a Journey to Protect Intellectual Freedom”**, webinar, October 28
Libraries are seeing an unprecedented number of book challenges and attacks on our nation's libraries. Amanda Jones – a school librarian from Louisiana and author of *That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America* – talks about her journey from being the target of a harassment campaign to finding the positives and deciding to fight back. Librarians and authors are a force to be reckoned with and by standing together there is hope in the darkness.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations

September 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:

- Changes to AISLE’s strategy on getting a certified school librarian in every school
- A discussion of the situation at Western Illinois University (WIU) with Anne Craig from CARLI
- Updates on legislative efforts from ILA
- Updates on the upcoming ILA and AISLE conferences

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

Kate Niehoff Attends 2024 ARSL Conference

RAILS Director of Consulting & Continuing Education Kate Niehoff attended the Association for Small & Rural Libraries Conference that took place September 11 – 14 in Springfield, MA. Kate learned about issues of importance to rural and small libraries and networked with RAILS members and staff from other states' library membership organizations.

Anne Slaughter Presents on PLA Panel

RAILS Director of Technology Services took part in a panel presentation from the Public Library Association (PLA) on the topic of digital equity in libraries. "Expand Library Digital Equity Services with New Funds Now!" was held on September 4. The panel included a discussion of using federal and state funding to advance digital equity in libraries. Over 450 people attended the event.

RAILS IT Successfully Updates Firewall and Installs New VPN Software

On Saturday, September 7, RAILS IT successfully completed an update to the RAILS firewall. During the process, all employees were also moved to a VPN service called OpenVPN Connect.

Conference Room Video Capabilities Updated

In August, RAILS IT completed a project to update camera tracking equipment and the project in the Deirdre Brennan Meeting Room at the Burr Ridge Service Center. These updates should lead to a better video experience for meetings.

Burr Ridge Generator Update

As an update to an item reported during the August board meeting, RAILS received a second opinion on the power generator which had previously failed its weekly test. We are pleased to report that a second contractor did not find any issue with the control board, and after making adjustments to a few loose connections the generator had a successful test run. Although we do not anticipate any additional repairs at this time, we still plan on having a generator assessment done during the current fiscal year. This was recommended by BTC in our capital needs assessment.

Burr Ridge Workstation Updates

RAILS will be adding two additional staff workstations in Burr Ridge during the month of October. These workstations will provide staff more flexibility when needing privacy for meetings, as well as for staff who work primarily from home and who need a work location for the day while in Burr Ridge. These workstations will be located in the office previously designated as our podcast room on the east side of our building.





AUGUST 2024: analytics



FOLLOWERS

July 2024

August 2024





 Facebook	2,513	2,533
 Instagram	1,445	1,443
 Twitter/X	1,447	1,447
 LinkedIn	1,605	1,639



REACH

July 2024

August 2024





 Facebook	4,196	15,334
 Instagram	904	1,779
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	N/A	N/A



IMPRESSIONS

July 2024

August 2024





 Facebook	N/A	N/A
 Instagram	3,547	5,886
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	4,544	5,507



ENGAGEMENT

July 2024

August 2024

 Facebook	1,373	1,434
 Instagram	313	429
 Twitter/X	N/A	N/A
 LinkedIn	176	212

AUGUST 2024: top posts

