

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

1.1 Narrative Report

Introduction

This narrative details RAILS activities and accomplishments in pursuit of the goals and activities listed in our FY 2024 Operational Plan. In everything we do, RAILS strives to provide our libraries with the best possible services and resources.

While this report covers a wide range of RAILS activities, we’d like to share just a few highlights:

- RAILS’ support for the RSA Independence Project
- RAILS and IHLS’ joint celebration of the 10 Year Anniversary of eRead Illinois
- RAILS’ support for the transition of Axis360 to Boundless
- The launch of the Social Justice in Public Libraries by Freedom Lifted resource
- The launch of the SLATE data dashboard
- RAILS’ communication and support for Public Act 103-0100
- RAILS’ collaborative efforts on broadband & digital equity
- The transition to a new Rockford delivery hub
- RAILS’ efforts to replace end-of-life delivery vehicles

One of the themes for our organization in FY 2024 was working collaboratively with our statewide partners. Some great examples include the celebration of the 10th anniversary of eRead Illinois, our support for libraries around Public Act 103-0100, and the SLATE data dashboard. In each of these projects, RAILS had strong support from organizations like Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Chicago Public Library System (CPLS), Consortium of Academic & Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), Illinois State Library (ISL), the Special Libraries Association-Illinois Community (SLA-IL), and other library-related organizations.

As an organization, we also underwent significant changes. That includes hiring a new Associate Executive Director, a new Director of Consulting & Continuing Education, and a new Director of Marketing & Communications. With new faces on our leadership team, we had the opportunity to rethink how we offer and communicate our services to members. We will continue to fine-tune our approaches in FY 2025.

The following narrative provides detailed information on these and many other FY 2024 activities. It follows the format of the 2022 – 2025 RAILS Strategic Plan, and all activities listed meet the requirements in the administrative rules for library systems.

Strategic Plan Goal One: RAILS provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing for all member libraries.

Objectives	Planned Activities
Enhance the sharing of knowledge and best	Hired new Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva. Jessica has been hard at work performing site visits, meeting with networking

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>practices through member networking and communications between all types of libraries</p>	<p>groups, and working together with statewide partners to support member libraries</p> <p>Planned/scheduled virtual and in-person networking opportunities for staff at all levels at all sizes and types of libraries, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milledgeville Public Library, RAILS Member Meetup • General George S. Patton School in Riverdale, IL, RAILS Member Event • “E-Content Options for Schools” RAILS Online Roundtable • “Starting a Networking Group” RAILS Online Roundtable • “Using the SLATE Data Dashboard” RAILS Online Roundtable <p>Worked with statewide partners, including AISLE, IACRL, IHLS, ILA, SLA-IL, and others to plan additional networking opportunities for staff from different types of libraries and for trustees from public libraries. (See examples throughout this document.) Regularly publicized networking opportunities offered by these organizations</p> <p>Helped plan/organize SLA-IL Community events, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person tour of Shorefront Legacy Center in Evanston • SLA-IL webinar, “Using Collective Intelligence Workshops to Create Structured Taxonomies” <p>Publicized existing RAILS networking groups and the benefits of belonging to a networking group to all levels of staff at all types and sizes of libraries</p> <p>Assisted in the creation of new RAILS networking groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Equity Networking Group <p>Continued to build and strengthen relationships and engagement with RAILS networking groups. Visited networking group meetings to share the latest RAILS news and gather feedback on RAILS programs/services</p> <p>Provided subsidized Zoom licenses to 23 networking groups</p> <p>Encouraged use of RAILS mailing lists, including lists geared toward different library types and sizes, and staff at all levels. Established new lists as needed</p>
<p>Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to</p>	<p>Continued to expand the RAILS discount and group purchase program. Gathered input from members at all types and sizes of libraries on desired discounts/group purchases and acted on input as possible. RAILS members saved over \$2 million through the program in FY 2024</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>their users than libraries would be able to afford on their own</p>	<p>Offers in FY 2024 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BiblioBoard Creator • BookBrowse for Libraries, readers' advisory resource • Brainfuse CollegeNow, college application process tools • Brainfuse HelpNow, tutoring and study suite • Brainfuse JobNow, job search services and tools • Comics Plus, digital comics, graphic novels, manga collection • Communico events planning and room booking tools • Creativebug, craft education hub • EBSCO K-12 resources • EBSCO public library resources • Era Books Online, phonics, readers, picture books, activities • Gale Early Literacy database package • Gale Presents: Udemy, online adult learning tool • Hiveclass, digital youth sports training encyclopedia • InfoBase databases • InfoBase streaming collections for all ages • LOTE Online for Kids, digital picture books in world languages • PressReader for Libraries, newspaper/magazine access • Public Web Browser • RDA Toolkit group purchase • READSquared, online tool for managing reading programs • SizeUp, Inc., small business advisor • Swank annual public performance license <p>Continued expansion of Consortia Manager platform to manage and optimize RAILS group purchases and discounts and streamline work processes</p> <p>Promoted Computers in Libraries conference discount offered through ISL</p> <p>Networked with group purchasing managers statewide and nationwide to explore new opportunities and discuss challenges related to consortial group purchasing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Online High School Diploma Programs</p> <p>Continued to subsidize the cost and management of the Career Online High School (COHS) and Gale Excel platforms to enable libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas and career certificates</p> <p>Distributed remaining COHS/Excel scholarships and gifted COHS/Excel participating libraries one scholarship</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Promoted programs via <i>RAILS E-News</i> and other channels</p> <p>Continued to meet with networking group of COHS/Excel library staff participants to develop and promote the program</p> <p>Added Gale Excel High School as another avenue for public library patrons to earn a high school diploma. Offered incentive that each library receives one RAILS-purchased scholarship at the time of enrollment</p>
<p>RAILS will continue to seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services.</p>	<p>Worked with RAILS members of all sizes and types to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs</p> <p>Consulted with members on delivery issues/concerns on an ongoing basis. Widely promoted the use of the delivery help desk ticketing system</p> <p>Created new RAILS delivery training video series for library staff. Topics covered included: preparing materials for delivery, finding library delivery info on L2, labeling, and how to get delivery support</p> <p>Promoted the need to complete quarterly delivery volume counts to RAILS members. Consulted with libraries on an individual basis as needed. Examined count data to help inform potential changes to existing delivery routes</p> <p>Completed development of iPad app for delivery drivers to replace handwritten documentation, making it possible to aggregate and analyze real-time maintenance and route data</p> <p>Continued providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI via ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service). Evaluated ILDS data to analyze changes in volume and respond with appropriate service changes</p> <p>Continued working with GeoMARC on improvements to RAILS delivery service, including delivery route efficiencies</p> <p>Received 12 out of 13 new delivery vehicles budgeted. These new vehicles replaced others that were nearing end-of-life</p>
	<p>General</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>Work collaboratively with members, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and the Illinois State Library to identify and support appropriate and affordable shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing to all libraries and residents</p>	<p>Continued to work with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase resource sharing in Illinois</p> <p>Collaborated with AISLE, CARLI, CPLS, IACRL, IHLS, ILA, ISL, SLA-IL, and other stakeholders to expand resource sharing as referenced throughout this document</p> <p>Collaborated with and supported the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). Several RAILS staff members also attended the ICOLC annual conference in Anaheim</p> <p>Completed the first data collection and initial analysis for the RAILCAR data project, which will aggregate and expand the data we currently have related to LLSAP services and impacts across RAILS. Created two dashboards, gathered input from LLSAP Directors, and prepared for the second year of data collection</p> <p>RAILS' Consortial Services Supervisor led a panel at the 2023 Illinois Library Association conference featuring staff from different libraries to discuss and promote various types of resource sharing. RAILS' Director of Technology Services also participated in the panel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Promote/Support LLSAP Membership</p> <p>Continued to provide a mix of financial support and services to six RAILS LLSAPs: CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA, and SWAN via the annual LLSAP Support Grant and ongoing support and consultation. Provided direct personnel, technology infrastructure, facility, and other support services to RSA staff as a component of their grant award</p> <p>Worked with RSA on their plan for operational and personnel independence from RAILS, including attending meetings with the RSA Board and Executive Committee. RAILS provided communication consultation for RSA as they worked to communicate these governance changes to their members. This included the creation of documentation to describe the different services provided by RSA vs. RAILS</p> <p>Offered catalog membership grants to encourage libraries to join a RAILS LLSAP and to make LLSAP membership more affordable. Awarded \$161,327 in grants to four libraries. Provided consultation to applicants and grantees throughout the process</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Promoted the value of consortium membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools, committee work, and member encounters</p> <p>Consulted with individual RAILS member libraries on LLSAP membership, Catalog Membership Grants, and automation-related tasks and responsibilities</p> <p>Continued to work with RAILS Consortia Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase consortial services in Illinois, including the potential use of ILS data as a component of the delivery count</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Expand and Promote Find More Illinois (FMI)</p> <p>Widely promoted benefits of joining FMI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Featured regular articles about FMI in the weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i> • Developed videos with testimonials from FMI library participants • Developed talking points for RAILS Board Advocacy Committee, RAILS Board Resource Sharing Committee, and others to use to promote FMI • Partnered with CARLI staff to develop a process and shared promotional plans to encourage academic libraries to join • Met individually with interested libraries for customized demos and discussions • Direct outreach to libraries that had previously requested quotes <p>Onboarded 17 libraries to FMI in FY 2024, including 14 public libraries and three school libraries, including technical setup, workflow consulting, and library staff training. There were 71 FMI participating libraries by the end of FY 2024</p> <p>Held a series of meetings with CCS to discuss their joining as a consortium, including negotiating a discount on their fees, planning for their use of the Enhanced Borrowing service, designing a customized onboarding process, and working collaboratively on technical setup. Their first group of libraries went live in May 2024</p> <p>Provided ongoing training, consulting, and technical support to FMI libraries and worked with Auto-Graphics to resolve support issues and advocate for software enhancements</p> <p>Provided Enhanced Borrowing service to interested FMI libraries to manage OCLC borrowing for unfilled requests. Continued to evaluate the sustainability of Enhanced Borrowing for participating libraries</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Continued working with Auto-Graphics on enhancements and additional services, including the potential of their Verso ILS for nonautomated or under-automated libraries. A consortial implementation of Verso was determined to be not feasible for RAILS, but advantageous pricing and specialized support is offered to nonautomated or under-automated libraries wishing to adopt Verso and join FMI</p> <p>Renegotiated the fees we pay to Auto-Graphics for the SHAREit software, reducing costs to RAILS overall, and secured more significant discounts for all Illinois libraries on the Verso ILS software</p> <p>Continued to offer IHLS the opportunity to participate in FMI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Support High-Quality Cataloging</p> <p>Cataloging Services Manager partnered with IHLS/CMC and representatives from diverse Illinois library types to plan and implement the iCAMP cataloging mentorship program. This program is designed to support cataloging staff at all levels in Illinois libraries, including both current professionals and those aspiring to enter the field</p> <p>Cataloging Services Manager collaborated with IHLS/CMC and PrairieCat staff to present two programs at the 2023 Illinois Library Association conference: "Grow with Cataloging Training" and "Free Cataloging Resources and Tools"</p> <p>Cataloging Services Manager developed and provided two six-week training courses via Moodle: "MARC 21 Standard: an introduction" and "Cataloging Monographs using RDA"</p> <p>Provided additional cataloging training webinars with external presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Inclusive Cataloging: Maintaining your Momentum" • "Getting started with OpenRefine" <p>Offered RDA Toolkit group purchase and WebDewey purchase as referenced above</p> <p>Continued offering World Language Cataloging Services Program as detailed below</p> <p>Provided expert consulting to RAILS member library staff on cataloging matters</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

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	<p>Publicized IHLS Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) programs via regular articles in the <i>RAILS E-News</i></p> <p>Cataloging Services Manager served as co-chair of the ALA Core Cataloging Norms Interest Group</p> <p>Published an article titled "Report of the Core Cataloging Norms Interest Group, Core Virtual Interest Group Week, March 2024" in the <i>Technical Services Quarterly</i> journal</p> <p>Continued to participate in the development of Open Rules for Cataloging, a national initiative to create a freely available collaborative cataloging code, serve on the Accessibility and Disability Working Group of the DEI in Metadata networking group, BIPOC Mentorship program committee, LACONI Technical Services planning committee, and maintain a presence in many networking groups and LLSAP committees</p> <p style="text-align: center;">eRead Illinois Boundless</p> <p>Recruited RAILS libraries and IHLS non-SHARE libraries to join eRead Illinois. Supported training and marketing needs of participants</p> <p>Supported eRead Illinois member libraries during the transition from Axis 360 to Baker & Taylor's new Boundless platform and app. Met with LLSAP managers. Provided regular communication via RAILS e-news and emails directly to member libraries. Co-hosted six Intro to Boundless webinars with Baker & Taylor for eRead Illinois member libraries</p> <p>Supported PrairieCat libraries through eRead Illinois onboarding. Gave a presentation at PUG Day in September 2023. (PrairieCat elected to remain in eRead Illinois as a complete consortium FY25-27)</p> <p>Updated the eRead Illinois membership dashboard to improve efficiency and record keeping during the sign up, renewal, and onboarding processes</p> <p>Marked the 10 Year Anniversary of the eRead Illinois program with a party held at the ILA Conference in October. About 300 people attended to celebrate the success of the statewide program. The event was hosted by RAILS and IHLS and open to all conference attendees</p> <p>Evaluated eRead content to ensure that it continued to meet member needs (see also EDI section below):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to add additional content for K-12 students

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to purchase popular e-books and audiobooks in Spanish in response to member feedback • Continued to seek input from eRead participants on the collection and implemented suggestions as possible <p>Evaluated e-content ordering procedures to ensure maximum efficiency. Met with specialists at Baker & Taylor to refine ordering procedures and criteria</p> <p>Networked with e-content managers statewide and nationwide to stay abreast of new developments and initiatives</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Inkie.org & Inkie.org Library</p> <p>Continued to partner with BiblioLabs to offer the Inkie.org Library to support self-publishing, Illinois authors, and Illinois e-content</p> <p>Publicized Inkie.org Library resources as being free (courtesy of RAILS) to all Illinois libraries and all Illinois residents, including those not served by a public library. Provided information to IHLS to share with their member libraries</p> <p>Added a selection of self-published titles to the eRead Illinois Boundless collection to expand reach and promote Inkie.org resources and services</p> <p>Continued offering group purchase pricing on BiblioBoard products for self-published authors</p> <p>Gave virtual presentations on inkie.org and the Inkie.org Library for interested member libraries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore More Illinois (EMI)</p> <p>Publicized EMI to all Illinois public libraries and encouraged them to participate</p> <p>Continued to work with IHLS to recruit IHLS libraries and set them up in the program</p> <p>Worked with Communications team to redesign Explore More Illinois website and added attractions map with driving directions</p> <p>Expanded community college pilot program. By the end of FY 2024, four Illinois community colleges were added to EMI</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Continued to expand the number and types of participating attractions, including attractions in other midwestern states</p> <p>Established two enrollment periods per year for public libraries to join</p> <p>Held targeted webinars for libraries with no ILS or limited ILS to explain how they can participate in the program</p> <p>Met with IHLS and CPLS staff to discuss a new logo and promotional opportunities for the program. These discussions will continue in FY 2025</p> <p>Networked with ePass (EMI’s software) administrators nationwide to explore new opportunities and solutions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other E-Resources Initiatives</p> <p>Supported the ISL with their statewide online resources efforts, including communicating information with members, assisting the SoS and ISL in surveying members, providing perspective at ISLAC, and regular conversations with ISL staff to keep them aware of developments in the RAILS membership</p> <p>Continued to develop RAILS Vendor Privacy Policies and VPAT (Vendor Product Accessibility Template) web pages with links to policies and VPATs for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries</p> <p>Supported additional efforts related to web accessibility including the development of a Digital Accessibility pulse page for the RAILS website, provided guidance from legal regarding discrimination complaints related to web accessibility, and the availability of several CE events focused on best practice in accessibility</p>

Strategic Plan Goal Two: *RAILS models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.*

Objectives	Planned Activities
RAILS will provide leadership in developing and providing resources that will support member libraries' efforts to provide	<p>Continued to work with RAILS Board EDI Committee to develop activities and programs to increase awareness about systemic racism and bias among member library staff and boards</p> <p>Launched the “Social Justice for Libraries” asynchronous course available through Freedom Lifted to deliver EDI training to member</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>equitable, diverse, and inclusive services.</p>	<p>libraries. At the end of FY 2024, 245 member library staff had participated</p> <p>Offered EDI-related CE, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s Not Them, It’s Us: Understanding and Addressing the Factors that Negatively Impact the Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention of BIPOC Librarians” webinar • “Putting the ‘U’ in Digital Equity” webinar • “Collaborating for Digital Equity and Inclusion” webinar • “Inclusive Cataloging: Maintaining Your Momentum” webinar • “Making Technology Accessible” webinar • “EDI Trustee Training: Navigating Difference in Library Boards” webinar • “Race, Human Development and the Anatomy of an Apology” webinar <p>Continued offering and publicizing the World Language Cataloging Services program statewide. Continued seeking grant funds from ISL to fund the program. The program was used by 35 public libraries, two academic libraries, and three school libraries and 962 bibliographic records were created</p> <p>Surveyed Illinois libraries to assess the efficiency and interest in the World Language Cataloging Services program. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with libraries particularly appreciating the program’s efficiency and its handling of non-Latin language materials</p> <p>Continued to develop/promote an eRead Illinois collection that addresses the needs of an ethnically and culturally diverse audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluated the collection using industry respected tools to identify potential gaps • Added e-books and audiobooks in Spanish to collection as referenced above • Continued to include curated list of racial justice titles with numerous anti-racism bestsellers • Continued to purchase simultaneous use, perpetual license titles from Paw Prints Publishing, which features diverse authors and perspectives in both English and Spanish versions <p>Recruited attractions for Explore More Illinois of interest to an ethnically and culturally diverse audience</p> <p>Offered discounts to help libraries with EDI efforts as noted above, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOTE Online for Kids, digital picture books in world languages

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EBSCO Core Collection en Espanol collection development resource, DEI package e-Book subscription • Infobase World Cinema Collection • PressReader for Libraries, access to newspapers/magazines from over 120 countries <p>Provided/promoted opportunities for members from all types and sizes of libraries to share best practices and collaborate on EDI-related challenges through the RAILS EDI mailing list, EDI Pulse Page, and other activities</p> <p>Promoted and provided administrative support as applicable for RAILS EDI-related networking groups, including the Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color Group; the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Metadata Group; and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team in Youth Services</p> <p>Included EDI elements in RAILS' CE Event and My Library Is... grants to encourage applicants to provide equitable, diverse, and inclusive programs/services for their community of users</p> <p>Continued membership in the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, a Chicago-based membership association whose mission is to connect all who seek to document, share, understand, and preserve Black experiences</p> <p>Continued supporting publicly available dashboards to share useful library data from IPLAR and other sources to support library decision makers and their advocacy efforts</p>
<p>Examine all aspects of RAILS policies, procedures, and core services through an equity lens and make needed improvements</p>	<p>Continued work of the RAILS Climate Team to identify and implement internal best practices and initiatives for staff</p> <p>Continued holding regular EDI training sessions for all RAILS staff. Staff trainings offered in FY 2024 included sessions focused on applying EDI principles to our work and making equitable decisions as managers</p> <p>Continued to provide editing tools on the RAILS website to monitor compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)</p> <p>Followed Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) when designing, formatting, and posting content to RAILS social media platforms. Paid careful attention to color contrast; avoided excessive flashings, strobing, and decorative fonts; used shortened URLs and CamelCase hashtags; included alternative text on all graphics and accurately captioned all videos with high-contrast text</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>Work with RAILS members of all types to identify and implement ways to diversify library governing bodies and staff to increase representation and better reflect the communities they serve</p>	<p>Continued to work with RAILS Board Policy Committee to examine RAILS Board election policies and procedures to attract a more diverse board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further enhanced board candidate application form to encourage diverse applicants • Added video candidate statements so that candidates could have the opportunity to share more about their experience and perspective • Encouraged members to vote with EDI principles in mind. Sent information on board election to all RAILS library agency directors via delivery service or U.S. mail to encourage more multitype library voting

Strategic Plan Goal Three: *RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future.*

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>Leveraging RAILS' power and influence in the Illinois library community, work collaboratively for additional funding for all types of libraries to ensure that libraries have the staffing, technology, and infrastructure needed to offer essential and cutting-edge services to their communities</p>	<p>Provided CE/consulting to help libraries with fundraising, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Grant Writing 101: Bringing Money to Your Library" webinar • Partnered with Library Book Selection Service (LBSS) Endowment Fund to offer "Grant Writing 101: Bringing Money to Your Library" for school and small public library staff <p>Continued to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), IHLS, ILA, and ISL reps to discuss collaborative projects to help school libraries deal with funding challenges. (See also information about RAILS' School Library Data project below)</p> <p>Publicized FY 2024 ISL grant opportunities, including the Live and Learn Construction Grant, Public Library Per Capita & Equalization Grant, and the School District Library Grant Program. Encouraged members to apply</p> <p>Publicized a wide variety of additional grant and scholarship opportunities from AISLE, ALA, ILA, and other library-related organizations</p> <p>Participated in a wide variety of efforts to help advocate for continued/increased funding for all types of libraries, including:</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILA Legislative Meetups, both attending and collating/contributing stories from the My Library Is... website blog demonstrating the value of libraries • Responding to ALA calls to actions • Continuing to work with ILA Public Policy Committee, ILA Advocacy Committee, and ISLAC to discuss and promote legislation of importance to libraries <p>Publicized opportunities for staff from member libraries to advocate for continued/increased funding for libraries as appropriate, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging members to attend ILA Legislative Meetups • Encouraging members to respond to ALA calls to action • Encouraging library staff to use talking points and other resources on the My Library Is... website <p>Worked with legal partners at Ancel Glink to provide guidance and support for public libraries complying with the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act</p> <p>Worked with legal partners at Ancel Glink to provide guidance and support for public libraries complying with the Paid Leave For All Workers Act</p> <p>Worked with legal partners at Ancel Glink to provide guidance and support for public libraries complying with changes to the laws on contractor reporting</p> <p>Worked with legal partners at Ancel Glink to provide guidance and support for discrimination complaints related to the Office for Civil Rights' Digital Access</p> <p>Held a series of networking events for public library directors about safety threats to libraries. This event was also attended by the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Library Association</p> <p>Kept RAILS members informed of other important legislative developments affecting libraries via regular articles in the <i>RAILS E-News</i> and other communications</p> <p>Worked with RAILS Board Advocacy Committee to educate the board about issues affecting RAILS and libraries that required their advocacy efforts</p>
Help member libraries of all types and sizes	My Library Is... (MLI) Initiative

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>demonstrate their value to their different stakeholders</p>	<p>Launched redesigned My Library Is... website with streamlined navigation</p> <p>Expanded My Library Is... Grants to all types of libraries. These grants allow libraries to focus on projects that help tell the library story and increase visibility and support for libraries. Awarded \$104,204.15 in grants to 28 projects</p> <p>Offered CE to help members promote their value, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No More Neutral: How to Champion the Right to Read” • “Best Practices for Library Use of Social Media” <p>Continued to offer IHLS the opportunity to participate in the MLI campaign</p> <p>(See additional campaign-related activities in previous section)</p>
<p>Professional development and member engagement efforts are future-focused, crossing library types and specific to individual library type needs</p>	<p>Provided CE/consulting on general resource sharing issues identified in the administrative rules, including interlibrary loan, the ILLNET Interlibrary Loan Code, nonresident service, the RAILS Resource Sharing Policy, etc. Provided information and training resources related to these topics on the RAILS website</p> <p>Provided CE/consulting on library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules as referenced in this document</p> <p>Provided CE/consulting to help libraries meet per capita grant requirements and standards for their type of library</p> <p>Continued to gather member input on CE needs from all sizes and types of RAILS libraries and implemented training to meet those needs</p> <p>Identified/monitored issues, trends, and challenges affecting libraries of all types and sizes and provided CE/consulting opportunities to help libraries respond to these issues and challenges, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with AISLE, CARLI, IHLS, and ILA to form of a Regional Response Team to help libraries dealing with materials challenges • Offered two AI webinars: “Libraries in the Age of AI” and “Media Literacy in the Age of AI” • Offered “Paid Leave for All Workers Act” webinar • Offered “The Modern eAccessibility Landscape” webinar <p>Continued to develop Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website to help members respond to current issues, challenges, and trends</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Continued to offer CE Event Grants to help libraries, networking groups, and library consortia plan/offer training events of interest to library staff. Awarded total of \$10,185 in grants in FY 2024</p> <p>Submitted application to become an approved professional development provider with the Illinois State Board of Education and application was accepted in June 2024. Will issue professional development credit to Illinois licensed educators for license renewal purposes through continuing education opportunities in FY 2025</p> <p>Worked with statewide partners to develop Directors University, the statewide training initiative for new public library directors. Publicized widely. Participants included 47 directors (30 from RAILS libraries)</p> <p>Worked with statewide partners to develop Directors 2.0 to offer intermediate-level training for library directors. Publicized widely. Participants included 30 Illinois public library directors (19 from RAILS libraries)</p> <p>Continued partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership. Publicized widely</p> <p>Continued partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline. Publicized widely</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Trustee Training</p> <p>Continued partnership with United for Libraries to provide statewide, online, on-demand trustee training. Publicized training widely</p> <p>Offered "EDI Trustee Training: Navigating Difference with Library Boards" with EDI Consultant Elisabeth "Biz" Lindsay-Ryan</p> <p>Consulted with/attended library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements and to develop leadership skills</p> <p>RAILS Board members and RAILS' Associate Executive Director served on Illinois Library Association Trustee Forum and planned three spring trustee training events</p> <p>Collaborated with IHLS on the creation and introduction of the iLead trustee training portal that is now available statewide. This collaboration will continue in FY 2025</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Strategic Plan Goal Four: *RAILS leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen the Illinois library community and expand services to all.*

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>RAILS will continue to strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations, including the Association of Illinois School Library Educators, the Chicago Public Library, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries, the Illinois Heartland Library System, the Illinois Library Association, the Illinois State Library, and the Special Libraries Association – Illinois Community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">L2 (Library Directory and Learning Calendar)</p> <p>Continued to provide statewide leadership for L2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted, maintained, and routinely updated the L2 software • Developed additional features and improvements in response to user feedback, including significant improvements to the calendar display, and a major version update to the Drupal software • Provided ongoing user help and support, including hosting and maintaining a support ticket system used by RAILS and IHLS • Continued to contract with Aten Design Group for L2 support and development • Asked ISL to continue to provide additional grant funding to support L2 • Provided a robust API and custom Drupal modules that allowed IHLS and LLSAPs to pull library and event data from L2 into their own websites • Continued to support annual certification for all member agencies of Illinois library systems through L2 (see also next section) • Continued to ensure the accuracy and currency of directory data from external sources such as IPLAR and ISBE <p>Continued working with statewide L2 Governing Group on long-term goals for L2, implementation of major new projects, and quality assurance</p> <p>Continued to participate in the Intercept open source software (which the L2 platform uses) community, including completing the development work required to begin contributing our customizations back to the source software for broader use</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Certification</p> <p>Worked with ISL, IHLS, and other partners to improve and enhance the annual certification process</p> <p>Worked with RAILS members to ensure that they completed the certification process</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other Collaborative Initiatives</p> <p>RAILS’ Executive Director attends the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC)</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>RAILS' Executive Director meets regularly with ISL Director to discuss ongoing and upcoming issues for RAILS and RAILS member libraries</p> <p>RAILS' Executive Director continued regular meetings with the Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library to discuss collaboration possibilities</p> <p>RAILS' Executive Director met regularly with IHLS Executive Director and CARLI Senior Director to discuss statewide electronic resources project, ILDS contract, ICOLC conference collaborations, and other possibilities for collaboration</p> <p>RAILS' Executive Director serves on the Advisory Board for Dominican University's School of Information Studies</p> <p>Continued to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to discuss collaborative projects related to school libraries as referenced above</p> <p>RAILS' Executive Director participated in Vernon Area District Library's program 'Book Challenges on the Rise: Support Your Freedom to Read' during Banned Books Week 2024. This Zoom event featured Secretary Giannoulas as well as area authors who have been affected by book banning and was moderated by syndicated columnist Heidi Stevens</p> <p>With AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and ISL hosted the 2023 Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, a one-day online event for school library workers with no formal library education. Over 250 attended live and more than 300 hours of credit were issued</p> <p>Had virtual booth at IHLS Member Day to provide information on RAILS programs available to libraries statewide</p> <p>Continued providing leadership and support to SLA-IL via RAILS' Director of Marketing & Communications serving as Interim President of that group</p> <p>RAILS' Director of Marketing & Communications served on the Special Libraries Association (SLA) national board</p> <p>Continued to serve as sponsor for library-related conferences as possible, including conferences aimed at libraries of all types and different staff levels</p> <p>Partnered on Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband Project READY grant with Western</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

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	<p>Illinois University (WIU). Eight RAILS public libraries were chosen to receive grants of \$650 each for digital access projects. Additionally, six RAILS public libraries were chosen to receive four LTE-enabled Chromebooks to lend to patrons. RAILS and WIU also co-hosted a one-day conference event featuring information on broadband and libraries. Over 30 people attended the event</p> <p>Supported an application from Dominican University's School of Information Studies, along with two other library schools for a 2024 National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)</p> <p>Promoted survey participation in the <i>Libraries as Partners for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Times of Crisis</i> grant project from the Illinois Fire Services Institute. This grant proposal was supported by RAILS and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)</p> <p>Continued collaborating with IHLS and CARLI to explore and promote library-related opportunities to engage with the current state and federal efforts to expand broadband access and advance digital equity, including future grant funding opportunities. On behalf of this group, RAILS' Director of Technology Services spearheaded the authoring of two open letters in response to the state's broadband deployment and digital equity plans, promoted the issue at the President's Program at the Illinois Library Association Conference, and developed content for a website designed to raise awareness and engagement</p> <p>RAILS' Director of Technology Services represents Illinois libraries on the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Broadband Advisory Council. Through this partnership with the Illinois Office of Broadband (IOB), she was invited to present on a webinar panel, an in-person panel at their Illinois Connected Summit, and a presentation at Reaching Forward North with a member of their staff</p> <p>RAILS' Director of Technology Services began collaborating with the Cook County Digital Equity office to help them engage with and support public libraries in the county, and met with Lake County digital equity staff to provide input on their library outreach activities</p>
<p>RAILS will continually seek to understand member perceptions of inequities in system services to better support academic, school, and specialized libraries, as</p>	<p>RAILS Member Engagement Specialist attended several networking groups meetings to get-to-know libraries and listen to their concerns</p> <p>RAILS staff attended Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) conference to stay aware of issues and challenges facing small and/or</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>well as public libraries of all sizes.</p>	<p>rural libraries. Promoted other ARSL educational opportunities and other activities throughout the year</p> <p>(See also Communications section below)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School Library Data Project</p> <p>Project renamed School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) to better reflect the ongoing work of the project and its dedication to advocacy and education</p> <p>Continued to work with statewide partners to gather data on Illinois school libraries to get a better picture of school library needs in Illinois and how we might collaboratively address those needs</p> <p>Began working with library partners outside of Illinois to share and discuss SLATE and school library data collection efforts in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Idaho</p> <p>Launched the SLATE Data Dashboard, an online, publicly accessible dashboard tool for viewing Illinois school library data</p> <p>Presented demonstrations and round table sessions on the SLATE Data Dashboard for RAILS, IHLS, and AISLE, including the AISLE Partnership Group and the AISLE Advocacy Committee</p> <p>Collaborated with Leah Gregory from the Illinois Heartland Library System to develop a one-page advocacy tool “The Value of School Libraries” for school administrators and worked with Jessie Ervin from ISBE to coordinate distribution</p> <p>Presented program session “Unlock the Power of Data” at October AISLE conference</p> <p>Co-presented program session “Advocating for Great Illinois School Libraries” with Dan Bostrom and Leah Gregory at October ILA annual conference</p> <p>Presented professional development session on school library data project in November 2023 at IHLS Member Day</p> <p>Co-presented two 3-hour professional development sessions on using data for library and collection management with Leah Gregory, IHLS, for school librarians at Arlington Heights SD 25 and Champaign CUSD 4</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<p>Presented 1-hour professional development session on using data for library and collection management at DuKane Institute Day in March</p> <p>Attended Illinois State University Lab Schools Library Retreat to discuss generating reports and data application for library management</p> <p>Invited school librarian volunteers to join the Data Collection Advisory Panel to guide and shape new data collection efforts for gathering school library data</p> <p>Convened and facilitated the Data Networking in School Libraries networking group</p> <p>Appeared on the <i>Circulating Ideas</i> podcast hosted by Steve Thomas to discuss SLATE and data in libraries</p>
<p>Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and are helping to create the best possible future for all member libraries</p>	<p>Continued to solicit member feedback via RAILS communication tools, surveys, and member encounters. Implemented changes/additions to RAILS programs/services based on member input as appropriate</p> <p>Published list of fine-free libraries on RAILS website</p> <p>Monitor usage data in dashboards to assess performance of programs and services such as CE, Explore More, eRead, among others</p> <p>Update RAILS grant rubrics as necessary to ensure goals are being met related to performance, and diversity and equity measures</p> <p>(See other sections of this document for plans to gather and respond to member feedback on specific RAILS programs/services)</p>
<p>Collaborate with the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and other partners to develop a plan and timeline for achieving universal service</p>	<p>Continued to work with the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee to find and implement solutions to challenges related to the unserved in Illinois</p> <p>Worked with Resource Sharing Committee to increase awareness within the library community of the significant number of unserved residents in Illinois. The group worked on advocacy and support for shared electronic resources and development of Find More Illinois</p> <p>Publicized requirement for library boards to vote annually on participation in the nonresident program and for members to update their participation information via L2. Publicized the names of</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	participating/nonparticipating libraries and share with the Illinois State Library per our statutory requirement

Other Administrative Activities

The following section details FY 2023 activities to meet statutory priorities for Illinois library systems not included in the sections above.

Objectives	Planned Activities
Engage and communicate with members and potential members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	<p style="text-align: center;">Member Recruitment</p> <p>Engaged with libraries of all types that expressed an interest in RAILS membership</p> <p>Visited potential members to ensure they meet membership criteria</p> <p>Worked with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General Member Communication/Engagement</p> <p>Promoted available programs/services via RAILS communication tools and member encounters, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAILS website • Weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i> • Visiting as many members as possible, either virtually or in person • Producing new RAILS services/program brochure to distribute to all interested member library staff and public library trustees • Scheduling RAILS member updates • Using available type of library mailing lists and lists for different types of libraries and different levels of staff to communicate about specific programs/services of interest • Attending RAILS networking group meetings as appropriate • Sending all new RAILS library directors a welcome communication to acquaint them with system programs/services, and offering to schedule “New Director Welcome” online discussions to provide more in-depth information • Continuing to feature “RAILS Minute” videos with the RAILS Executive Director highlighting the latest system news • Offering one-on-one online meetings for school library staff who were new to their district, new to RAILS, or for anyone who wanted a refresher on system services

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving an update on RAILS programs/services at Health Science Librarians of Illinois Conference (HSLI) <p>Updated eRead Illinois, Find More Illinois, Explore More Illinois, inkie.org, and My Library Is websites to replace outdated version of Drupal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensured that the new websites are fully accessible to those with disabilities as referenced above <p>Exhibited at library conferences geared at different types of libraries and different levels of staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 114 visitors to RAILS exhibit booth at October AISLE conference • Approximately 347 visitors to RAILS exhibit booth at October ILA conference • Approximately 66 visitors to RAILS exhibit table at April Reaching Forward South conference • Approximately 425 visitors to RAILS exhibit table at May Reaching Forward North conference
<p>Engage and communicate with the RAILS Board of Directors to ensure that they are aware of RAILS programs and services, that they can serve as ambassadors for RAILS, and that their service on the board is as rewarding as possible</p>	<p>Communicated regularly with the board through board mailing list and other means</p> <p>Kept board informed about important issues for RAILS and for libraries of all types. Provided monthly talking points for communicating with members about select RAILS programs/services</p> <p>Planned/implemented orientation session at Burr Ridge service center for all new RAILS Board members. Invited existing board members to attend for a refresher</p> <p>Scheduled board meetings in different parts of the RAILS area as possible so the board could learn about different areas of the system</p> <p>Continued to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board as referenced above</p> <p>Supported board conference/meeting attendance as appropriate</p>
<p>Recruit RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and objectives. Actively seek a diverse staff in terms of</p>	<p>Encouraged/supported professional development for staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided all staff with access to LinkedIn Learning for online courses on a wide range of topics • Created and delivered monthly safety training sessions for all RAILS staff during regular staff meetings

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

Objectives	Planned Activities
<p>race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and other factors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged RAILS staff to attend conferences and participate in RAILS continuing education events <p>Continued to hold monthly staff meetings to keep all staff informed of the latest RAILS developments and to help staff at different service centers engage with each other</p> <p>Continued work of RAILS Staff Engagement committee to develop collaborative activities for all staff</p> <p>Conducted interviews with staff hired in 2023-2024 to gather feedback on staff culture, onboarding, and the hybrid work environment</p> <p>Continued to prioritize EDI-related staff activities and initiatives as referenced above</p>
<p>Maintain robust technology infrastructure needed to carry out all RAILS programs/services</p>	<p>Fully re-cabled the Burr Ridge facility, replacing 25-year-old cables and greatly improving the building’s network infrastructure</p> <p>Designed and built custom charging stations at the RAILS facilities for the Delivery iPads. This allows for easy and safe storage and charging of all iPads</p> <p>Continued migration away from local storage for staff files, moving all staff to OneDrive and continued implementing the use of SharePoint by specific departments</p> <p>Implemented a New CrowdStrike security infrastructure to enhance already strong security practices</p> <p>Updated meeting rooms to use more cost-effective technology with Zoom rooms</p> <p>Replaced staff computer monitors at all RAILS locations, improving ergonomics and eye strain, and a very high failure rate of the current monitors</p> <p>Cabled the new Rockford facility, installed security cameras as well as IT infrastructure including WiFi access points</p> <p>Provided regular cybersecurity training to staff and Board, showing real world examples of how an attacker might try to gain access to RAILS or any organization</p>

RAILS FY 2024 Annual Report

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	<p>Developed a software application to track all of RAILS' contracts and keep us advised of due dates and grace periods as well as allowing for easy audit of current contracts</p> <p>Implemented an email signature system that provides a consistent signature across all platforms and allows communications to customize signatures with promotional messages as desired</p> <p>Continued to set up and support Zoom accounts for RAILS member networking groups</p> <p>Continued to support RAILS staff and Board members' use of their RAILS-provided technology software and equipment</p>