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Agenda item 8.3

Executive Director Report, September 2025

Provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Other Federal Updates

Changes and developments about Federal support for libraries have continued since we last met in August. As this situation continues to change, I encourage you to visit the RAILS [IMLS Advocacy](#) Pulse page for the most up to date information we have to share.

On July 30, a federal judge [declined to reinstate](#) Register of Copyrights Shira Perlmutter (who was fired on May 10) saying that she failed to show “irreparable harm”. She then filed an [emergency motion](#) to keep her position. On Wednesday, September 10, a federal appeals court ruled that she can continue serving in her post despite the White House’s claim that she was fired. Two judges of the three judges ruled that because she is housed in the legislative branch and her primary role is to serve Congress, she is protected from dismissal.

On July 31, a bipartisan group of US Senators [rejected cuts](#) to education and libraries including the recommendation of nearly full funding for IMLS and the Department of Education. On September 2, a House subcommittee also included a recommendation to fund the IMLS at \$291.8 million, the same figure that the Senate identified. A modest increase of \$400,000 was also included for LSTA.

The 2018 Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA)—the legislation through which most federal library support derives—is also up for reauthorization as of October 1. ALA Deputy Director for Public Policy and Advocacy Kevin Maher shared with [Words and Money](#) in a September 5 article that Congress can continue to fund libraries and the IMLS even if the MLSA authorization expires. The expiration doesn't change the status of the agency as long as there is still support for IMLS within Congress and they continue to fund the program.

This year there was an increase in the number of lawmakers signing on to this year's ‘[Dear Appropriator](#)’ letters ahead of the FY2026 budget process, an important sign of support for funding measures.

The House of Representatives is now back in session and it is a priority to progress on a budget for fiscal year 2026, with a September 30 deadline fast approaching. The House voted for a seven-week extension that would delay the deadline for passage until the end of November, but the Senate has not yet voted on the bill at the time of this writing.

On Thursday, Sept 10 The U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit on Thursday denied a request by defendants in Rhode Island v. Trump to stay a May 13 preliminary injunction that formally ordered a halt to the dismantling the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and two more federal agencies ordered by President Donald Trump in

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Other Federal Updates (cont.)

March. It is the second time in roughly three months that defendants in the case, including the president and IMLS acting director Keith Sonderling, were denied a stay pending appeal.

Illinois Legislative Updates

I attended the Illinois Library Association Public Policy Committee meeting as Ex Officio in Bloomington on August 25. The committee discussed at length the legislative proposals that were received and selected their priorities to share with the ILA Executive Board. The Executive Board is expected to determine priorities at their September meeting. The ILA

The committee meets next on Monday, October 6.

RAILS Launches New Resource Sharing Map

RAILS is excited to announce the launch of its new [Resource Sharing Map](#), a powerful tool designed to help libraries explore, analyze, and advocate for libraries across Illinois. Built on the advanced ArcGIS software platform, this updated map is now publicly available and offers more features and flexibility than ever before.

The new map allows users to search and filter by features like consortia buildings, public library service areas, system service areas, Illinois counties, and more. Whether viewing the map on a statewide scale or narrowing the focus to specific details, users can access a comprehensive and customizable view of Illinois' library landscape.

This digital map replaces the previous printed version, which had not been updated since 2019. With its new digital format, RAILS will be able to update the map more frequently, ensuring users always have access to the latest data. Key features include the ability to filter by system boundaries, public library boundaries, consortia, and other relevant factors, creating a more dynamic user experience.

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

RAILS Collaborates with Dr. Colin Rhinesmith on Digital Inclusion

Anne Slaughter, Grant Halter, and Janette Derucki have begun a collaboration with Dr. Colin Rhinesmith, associate professor and director of the [Digital Equity Action Research \(DEAR\) Lab](#) in the School of Information Sciences (or iSchool) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Through the fall semester, Dr. Rhinesmith will guide several iSchool grad students through a project to review current data on digital inclusion and digital navigator services offered at RAILS libraries, identify gaps, and conduct relevant research. The deliverable will be a framework to support future data collection, outcome measurement, and advocacy activities, with potential statewide application. We hope this project will lead to additional opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration with Dr. Rhinesmith and the iSchool.

RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future

RAILS Submits Legislative Proposal on Trustee Training

RAILS submitted a legislative proposal to the Illinois Library Association's Public Policy Committee recommending an annual training requirement for all public library trustees in Illinois. The proposal aims to align Illinois with other states

RAILS Submits Legislative Proposal on Trustee Training (cont.)

that mandate trustee training, as well as with existing requirements for board members of entities like Illinois community colleges and school boards. While the committee expressed support for the proposal, it must still be reviewed and approved by the ILA Executive Board before proceeding further.

Cook County Digital Navigator Network Partnership Kicks Off

Our collaboration with Cook County to implement a Digital Navigator Network among the County's suburban libraries formally kicked off in August. Led by Anne Slaughter, RAILS staff from the Data, Communications, Administrative, and Finance teams have been working with their team to establish the necessary financial and administrative structures for the project and to develop our plan for program design and implementation. Initial activities include recruiting a Guiding Team of library staff and other stakeholders to participate in the co-design of a program which will support interlibrary collaboration and provide direct capacity-building funding to libraries. Project activities will continue through November 2026.

RAILS Offers New Narcan in Libraries Resources

To help libraries learn more about the use of Narcan (naloxone) in libraries, RAILS has created the new [Narcan in Libraries Pulse Page](#). In addition to information about the new law, Public Act 104-0056, signed by Governor Pritzker, the page contains background information, events, and links to other resources. We will update it as new information becomes available.

Leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen Illinois library community

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: Central Illinois - Bloomington (Nov 19), Northwest Illinois - DeKalb (Nov 19), South Suburban and Chicago - Alsip (Dec 2), West Suburban and Chicago – Oak Brook (Dec 2), and North Suburban and Chicago - Northbrook (Dec 3). If you have an interest in attending on behalf of RAILS, please let Stacy or myself know.

RSA Approved to Join IMRF

We are pleased to report that RSA's application to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) was approved during the IMRF Board's August meeting. This marks another significant milestone in RSA's independence project. Becoming an IMRF employer is critical for current staff who will continue with RSA and strengthens RSA's ability to recruit for future staffing needs.

RAILS Joins SHLB

RAILS has recently joined the Schools, Health, & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB, pronounced "shelby," <https://www.shlb.org/>), which advocates for policies and programs that help anchor institutions like libraries provide access to broadband and technology tools. We had the opportunity to connect with their team in August when they were in Chicago for NTIA's State Broadband Leaders Network conference. Anne Slaughter, joined by Monica Harris and Dan Bostrom, arranged and attended a wonderful tour of the Oak Park Public Library's Main Library location. The following day, Anne, Monica, and Jessica Silva attended a SHLB-hosted reception where we were able to connect with our partners at the Public Library Association, Illinois Office of Broadband, Cook County, and more.

Chicago Association of Law Libraries Presentation

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present about RAILS and library advocacy to the Chicago Association of Law Libraries (CALL) in Chicago for their Business Meeting on September 18. Thank you to CALL for the invitation and the opportunity to speak with your members about our services and support.

Grand Opening Celebrations

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend two Grand Opening celebrations for RAILS members this month. On September 13, I was there for the ribbon cutting of the Green Hills Public Library's 24-hour Library. On September 16, I was fortunate to be at the Normal Public Library's Ribbon Cutting for their renovated space. Both libraries have beautiful new offerings that will benefit their communities for years to come! Congratulations to all for all involved for your investment and hard work.

Looking Ahead to October

- **October Service of the Month and Board Development topics – RAILS Deals & Discounts and Cybersecurity for Libraries**



This Month at RAILS – September 2025

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:

iCAMP Mentoring Program Moves Into Second Year

RAILS is excited to announce the continuation of the Illinois Cataloging Mentorship Program (iCAMP), a nine-month initiative designed to foster both professional and personal development among participants. Over nine months, participants will engage in monthly meetings with suggested topics from the iCAMP Mentorship Committee. These sessions serve as focal points for mentors and mentees to connect and discuss goals. Applications are now closed.



RAILS Hosts L2 Signup Month Contest

As part of a year-long effort to encourage staff and trustees from member libraries to sign up for a Library Learning (L2) account, RAILS declares September "L2 Signup Month." To celebrate, we're hosting a contest! Throughout September 2025, anyone who creates a new L2 account will be automatically entered in a drawing to win a \$100 Visa gift card.

\$150k Content Boost for eRead Illinois

RAILS is excited to announce that we've secured an eRead Illinois exclusive discount on content through Boundless, allowing us to purchase an additional \$50,000 worth of e-books and audiobooks for the shared collection. This means more titles will result in shorter wait times and better user experience without any additional cost to member libraries.



This discount directly supports one of eRead Illinois' top priorities of reducing holds and wait times for patrons. It allows us to respond to the growing demand for digital content, especially audiobooks, which continue to see increased circulation. Thanks to both this new discount from Baker & Taylor and an additional \$100,000 from RAILS, the program will be purchasing even more audiobooks to help meet growing patron needs.

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 one site visit at a member library in August. She visited:

- North Riverside Public Library (pictured, right)

To learn more about these visits, see our site visit map, or to request a visit, please visit the [RAILS Library Site Visits page](#).

RAILS Social Media Engagement

See the report at the end for info on our August 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](#).

Group Purchases

The RAILS Deals & Discount team put together a small advisory group to pilot and provide feedback on two potential new resources. Participating libraries received free trial access to the resource, attended live vendor demos, tested among the library staff, and then provided feedback to the RAILS Deals team about their experience, interest, and the qualities of the product. This feedback will be used to assist the team in deciding which resources to prioritize for rollout in the future, and we plan to continue using this model going forward.

New Library Specialist Announced

We are delighted to announce that Kortni Springer started her new role as a RAILS Library Resource Specialist on September 3. She will work with Maggie Thomann to support the growing Deals & Discounts program. Kortni has nearly 10 years of experience in various roles at the Acorn Public Library District in Oak Forest, most recently as the Adult Services Manager. As the Library Resource Specialist, Kortni will help identify quality products and services for RAILS member libraries, maintain and analyze data related to purchasing, and process finalized deals.

Vendor Webinars: Blinkist Trial Demo

Kyle Wiseman from Library Ideas led a demo on August 15 for a small group of five RAILS trial libraries and answered questions about the potential new resources.

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, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
511	270	74	62%/53%

Gale Excel Stats as of August 31, 2025

Scholarships Awarded	Total Graduates	Current Number of Students in Program	RAILS Graduation Rate/National Rate
52	19	31	90%/53%

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

Find More Illinois Update

The Find More Illinois team met on August 22 with representatives of Auto-Graphics to discuss patron authentication methods for member libraries.



Libraries Participating in Find More Illinois as of August 31, 2025

Academic	Public	School	Special	Total
3	71	11	1	86

Find More Illinois total transactions (loans and borrows)

Time Period	Number of transactions
August 2025	1,548
Fiscal Year to Date	2,908

Find More Illinois catalog

Time Period	Number of items in shared catalog
August 2025	8,583,687

Find More Illinois Training

Date of Training	Library	Number of Participants
August 6	Antioch High School	1
August 12	Northern Illinois University	3

Find More Illinois Demos/Reviews

Date of Training	Library
August 1	Aurora University
August 19	Wyoming Public Library District
August 21	Black Hawk College
August 25	McHenry College

eRead Illinois & Inkie.org Update

Baker & Taylor agreed to extend the discount they receive on content from publishers to RAILS so we can continue to bolster the eRead Illinois collection. RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm and Baker & Taylor sales representative Rustin Howard collaborated on promotional copy to publicize the impact to member and prospective eRead Illinois libraries.



eRead Illinois Boundless Checkouts

Time Period	E-Books	Audiobooks	Total
August 2025	18,856	20,890	39,746
Fiscal Year to Date	34,581	40,398	74,979

Inkie.org Library Views

Time Period	Number of Views
August 2025	1,442
Fiscal Year to Date	3,041

Explore More Illinois Update

In August 2025, 5,311 reservations were made in Explore More Illinois. The most popular downstate and suburban attractions in August 2025 were:

- Morton Arboretum in Lisle (757)
- Brookfield Zoo (500)
- Cantigny in Wheaton (260)
- Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe (199)
- Gillson Swimming Beach in Wilmette (138)



The most popular Chicago attractions in August 2025 were:

- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (632)
- Art Institute of Chicago (600)

- Field Museum (482)
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (389)
- Chicago Children’s Museum (306)

In August, Explore More Illinois welcomed the DuPage Symphony Orchestra for their 2025-2026 season.

Staffing transition: in August, RAILS Director of Library Resources and Programs Leila Heath and team members RAILS E-Content Specialist Anna Behm and RAILS Library Resource Specialist Maggie Thomann participated in the hiring process for the new full-time Special Projects Librarian. Mary Kate Murray, new RAILS Special Projects Coordinator, and RAILS Executive Assistant Stacy Palmisano have been actively managing the program during the interim period.

Libraries Enrolled in Explore More Illinois as of August 31, 2025

RAILS Libraries	IHLS Libraries	Chicago Public Library	Community Colleges	Total
353	105	1	4	463

Attractions in Explore More Illinois as of August 31, 2025

Attractions	69
Total Attractions in 2025	78

Reservations Made in Explore More Illinois in August 2025

Organization	August 2025
RAILS/IHLS	1,938
CPL	3,373
Total	5,311

Model best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion

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

Request Form Streamlined for World Language Cataloging Service

The request form for the World Language Cataloging service has been updated to allow for a more streamlined user experience when adding multiple items. The RAILS Cataloging Services team continues to accept items from libraries, though the grant from the Illinois State Library that funds this service has not yet been approved. Items that can be cataloged in-house are fully processed, and items that will be sent to our vendor for outsourced cataloging are being pre-processed and held until funding is received.

Assist member libraries in preparing for the future

Future-focused professional development and member engagement efforts

RAILS Expands Catalyst Program to Welcome Diverse First Cohort

Due to strong interest in RAILS' new leadership development program, we increased the number of available spots in the first RAILS Catalyst cohort from 40 to 48. Selections for this competitive program were based first and foremost on overall application scores, which reflected both the applicant's personal essay and the letter of support from their manager or administrator. In addition to individual scores, the Catalyst Design Team ensured that the final cohort represented a diversity of library types, geographic locations within our service area, and the racial and ethnic demographics applicants self-identified in their applications.

RAILS CE Event Grant Applications Due October 6

RAILS is now accepting applications for our CE Event Grants. Networking groups, consortia, and individual libraries can apply for up to \$2,000 to put together an educational event. Applicants do not need to be a director or manager to apply; any library staff member is encouraged to submit a proposal. The deadline to apply is October 6.

RAILS, IHLS, and ILA Announce Launch of DU On Demand

We're excited to announce the release of a series of Directors University (DU) videos called [DU On Demand](#). DU is a joint project of IHLS, ILA, and RAILS. This professional development series is intended for first-time directors and directors new to Illinois from public libraries of all shapes and sizes. To make learning more accessible, DU on Demand content is shared at no cost to help Illinois library directors grow. It does not replace the annual in-person Directors University experience. This new online content is specifically designed to provide foundational skills for new public library directors, but available to any level of staff at any Illinois library. Staff from member libraries can access these videos in the RAILS [Continuing Education Archives](#). New content will be added regularly.

Recent CE Events

- **"RAILS Learning Lab: Creating Community Through Genealogy and Local History Services,"** online meeting, August 15
- **"Family Service Partnerships and Outreach,"** webinar, August 19
- **"Hiring Better: Building Smarter Recruitment Practices in Your Library,"** webinar, August 20
- **"From Startups to Libraries: Experimentation as a Catalyst for Change,"** webinar, August 26
- **"Practical Strategies for Speaking to Power,"** webinar, August 27
- **"Reimagining Library Spaces on a Budget,"** Helen Plum Library, September 11
- **"In-Person RAILS Learning Lab: Library of Things,"** Alsip-Merrionette Park Library, September 17

Upcoming CE Events

- **"Building Stronger Generational Teams,"** webinar, September 18
- Due to increased longevity in the U.S. and around the world, four generations populate the workplace today. And each of these generations has unique priorities, communication preferences, and work styles. In this course, participants learn about these generations and how to best leverage their

strengths and address their needs, as well as how to increase trust, cooperation, and productivity on their teams, departments, and in their organizations.

- **“Up or Out: Getting Employees Back on Track,”** webinar, September 24
This workshop will help employers and supervisors identify essential skills for all library applicants, learn how to tease out those skills during an interview, and provide tips for diagnosing and coaching wayward employees. The workshop will also describe how to end a work relationship that can't be saved.
- **“Trustee Training: Robert’s Rules of Order,”** webinar, September 27
Professional Registered Parliamentarian Steve Anderson will provide a practical review of *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised* to help you lead and participate in board meetings with confidence and fairness. He’ll cover the essentials of meeting management, including bylaws, agendas and the order of business, how to handle motions and debate, conducting elections and voting, and addressing issues of member discipline.
- **“Illinois Notary Public Best Practices,”** webinar, October 1
Get an overview of the most crucial aspects of being a notary in Illinois, focusing on current laws, best practices, and the responsibilities of the role. Given the recent updates to the Illinois Notary Public Act, including new requirements for education and journaling, this session will clarify what's needed to ensure you are acting in full compliance and with confidence.
- **“RAILS Learning Lab: Training Patrons to Be Digitally Resilient,”** online meeting, October 10
RAILS Learning Labs are an informal, online space for interactive, hands-on learning and collaboration. In this session, practice strategies to help your patrons with digital resilience, which offers an alternative to task- or tool-specific approaches to technology instruction by focusing on confidence, adaptability, and strategies that transfer across technologies.

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.

August meeting topics included:

- School Library Advocacy Through Education (SLATE) update
- AISLE & ILA Annual Conference updates
- Illinois School Library Workers Symposium (ISLWS) update
- ILA Legislative Meetups

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

RAILS Staff & Service Center News

Anne Slaughter Joins Core Strategic Planning Task Force

RAILS Director of Technology Services Anne Slaughter has agreed to join the Strategic Planning Task Force for the Core division of ALA. The Task Force will work through early 2026 to conduct research and member engagement and develop a draft plan for Core Board approval, followed by handoff to an implementation task force.

***Can't Shelve This* Crew Presents at IHLS Extra Credit!**

RAILS Data Analyst Janette Derucki, IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory, and RAILS Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist Ola Gronski presented about the *Can't Shelve This* podcast at IHLS's Extra Credit! session on August 20, 2025. They discussed the podcast's origin story, why they chose this format, the planning process, and the exciting results from the show's first season.

Jessica Silva Presents at SARL Meeting

RAILS Member Engagement Specialist Jessica Silva presented alongside IHLS School Library Membership Coordinator Leah Gregory at the recent Small and Rural Libraries (SARL) Forum meeting on July 28. SARL is a forum of the Illinois Library Association. The presentation was a database deep dive about the Illinois State Library's statewide database package. 23 SARL members attended.

RAILS IMLS Stories Receives #LibraryOfTheDay Honor

Library Marketing Expert Angela Hursh [recognized RAILS and Streator Public Library](#) as the #LibraryOfTheDay for their collaboration on an [IMLS Stories blog post](#). RAILS is spotlighting libraries and institutions in Illinois that have received IMLS grant money to showcase the local impact from those funds. In this particular post, then-RAILS Communications Intern Gwen Gemmell speaks with Streator Public Library Director Melissa Badger about their Carnegie library dome restoration project.

RAILS IT Update

In August, the IT team successfully completed the bidding process for new printers. The new printers will be installed in December. The bidding process is also proceeding nicely with our new staff laptops. The bids have all come in well under budget. The IT team is also working to install new virtual server infrastructure. The migration has been successfully tested, but final migration will be taking place in October. The RAILS IT team worked with RAILS Executive Assistant Stacy Palmisano to complete a disposal process for emails that were stored on a decommissioned archive server and well past the required retention period.

Bolingbrook Facility Update

A 12-foot low-voltage ceiling fan was recently installed in the Suite D sorting area of our Bolingbrook facility. This addition is intended to improve air circulation and help mitigate heat and stagnant air in the section of the facility with the highest level of staff activity.

Coal Valley Facility Update

RAILS has begun exploring options for a capital needs assessment of our Coal Valley facility. We have contacted Building Technology Consultants, Inc.(BTC) who conducted the previous assessment at our Burr Ridge location, while also researching firms in the Quad Cities area to identify a cost-effective option that meets our analysis requirements.

AUGUST 2025

RAILS
DIGITAL MARKETING
BOARD REPORT



FOLLOWERS

total subscribers

Facebook +25

2,778

Instagram +13

1,682

LinkedIn +47

2,134

REACH

accounts shown our content

Facebook -638

5,229

Instagram +14

983

LinkedIn -1,287

2,224

VIEWS

times our content was seen

Facebook -5,877

22,340

Instagram +1,847

10,206

LinkedIn -2,426

5,011

ENGAGEMENT

reactions, comments, and shares

Facebook -259

772

Instagram +54

384

LinkedIn -73

188

TOP POST

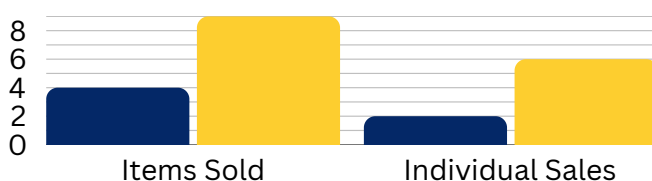
received the most engagement



RAILS Online Store

● July 2025

● August 2025



RAILS Minute Views: 573



Can't Shelve This Listens: 1,054