



**PrairieCat Administrative Council
Minutes**

December 6th, 2022

The Council met on Tuesday, December 6th, 2022, 8 am –11 am

Online via Zoom:

<https://railslibraries.zoom.us/j/97888264951>

PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comments may be submitted via email to Carolyn.coulter@prairiecat.info at least two hours before the beginning of the meeting.

I. Call to order, Welcome and Introductions

Present via Zoom: Carolyn Coulter (PrairieCat), Elizabeth Smith (PrairieCat), Laura Long (EM), Ashley Huffines (FP), Laura Watson (HC), Beth Ryan (JO), Michelle Krooswyk (NL), Kimberly Brozovich (RP), Emily Faulkner (DK),

Absent: Chelsey DeSplinter (PrairieCat), Kelly McCully (BD), Victoria Blackmer (CV), Penny Bryant (PT), Megan Gove (TF)

Carolyn Coulter (PrairieCat) called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

II. Introduction of Visitors and Public Comments

There were no public comments. Visitors included Emily Fister (RAILS), Kendal Orrison (RSA), Genna Buhr (RSA), Alissa Williams (RSA), Heidi Rhea (RSA), Anne Slaughter (RAILS), Monica Harris (RAILS), Jenny Sevier (RSA), Beth Duttlinger (RSA), John Newton

III. Review Agenda for Additions/Changes

There were no revisions.

IV. Facilitated discussion, RSA and PrairieCat partnership potential in the future

Objectives – RAILS

Anne Slaughter (RAILS) provided background information on the system history and the ways RAILS has supported LLSAPs in the past. RSA receives the most financial and in kind support from RAILS. SWAN and PrairieCat have made moves toward sustainability and independence during the past several years. Slaughter said RAILS does not have an end goal in mind for potential partnerships, but does think there may be shared goals between the organizations.

Approach – John Newton

John Newton facilitated the discussion. Newton has experience with human resources, strategic planning, and organizational planning. Newton shared some strategies for a successful meeting such as remaining positive and strategic as the organizations discuss.

RSA sharing

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Kendal Orrison (RSA) shared the current status of RSA and thoughts about the possible ways of RSA gaining independence from RAILS. Is it possible for RSA to partner (in some way) with other consortia. Orrison said he wants to keep in mind what the future in 5 or 10 years' time will look like for library service and how that may impact strategic planning. Orrison said at minimum RSA will mirror what SWAN and PrairieCat have done and move toward independence such as becoming an Illinois intergovernmental instrumentality and aiming to join LIMRICC and IMRF. However, he thinks some form of partnership may make sense.

PrairieCat sharing

Coulter (PrairieCat) shared some of the big picture process of PrairieCat's move toward independence including the transitions to LIMRICC, IMRF, and now IT infrastructure. Coulter shared some of the challenges of the process were administrative such as joining IMRF. Coulter shared about 30% of PrairieCat's support comes from the RAILS LLSAP grant. She shared a positive was that the membership has really taken ownership of the organization through independence and understand it is a member-driven organization. Smith shared another positive has been strong staff cohesion during the past few years as the organization has been more independent.

Challenges and concerns

Orrison (RSA) shared some of Resource Sharing Alliance history. The organization began as a way to get records into OCLC. It continued to expand and in the 90s, library systems joined around RSA. The goal was to automate the libraries within RSA. The RSA membership includes publics and schools, mostly small and rural publics. RSA only has 4 union listing libraries.

Orrison shared in a perfect world, they would continue on with what they are doing now. Orrison said he would like to maintain as much of their culture as they can such as allowing very small libraries to join. Orrison said getting into IMRF is a must for his staff so therefore the organization needs to change from a 501c3 to an Illinois intergovernmental instrumentality. Orrison said another option is to piggy back on another organization. RSA can't piggy back on RAILS anymore so are looking to see if partnering with PrairieCat is an option.

Some members of RSA shared their opinions and highlighted that retaining their members especially the small ones was important for them.

Coulter (PrairieCat) shared that member sustainability is important and PrairieCat evaluates that when accepting new members. Coulter pointed out the RAILS project with Find More Illinois may be a solution for some of those smaller libraries. Slaughter (RAILS) explained the status of the Find More Illinois service. This is an ILL service but is missing a circulation component. So one goal is to provide an ILS software to libraries that are not automated or under automated. RAILS would have eligibility requirements for libraries that would want to join at low cost. This project is in the very early stages. The gray area of eligibility is libraries that are currently in LLSAPs and brings up questions of LLSAP sustainability. RAILS is not looking to compete with LLSAPs for membership but do acknowledge that some of these libraries need this support.

Orrison (RSA) said that RSA does not want to lose members because they can't afford an independent RSA. Orrison said next year's project is to build a new

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pricing model. Orrison said there are two options: Option 1 (RSA independence) and Option 2 (PrairieCat partnership). Orrison said he just wanted to see if Option 2 has any traction; if so, then he wants to start incorporating that into RSA's planning. Coulter shared the google data dashboard that shows fees as a percentage of operating expenditures:

https://datastudio.google.com/reporting/80246fbf-f41b-41e2-aead-88bb5a82e3ab/page/p_0rutoi16oc

After a short break, Monica Harris (RAILS) shared that core services and support that RAILS provides for LLSAPs. Slaughter (RAILS) shared RAILS plans to continue LLSAP grants, however, the program will continue to evolve as needed.

Newton (facilitator) said we have identified two big picture options. Now, let's focus on Option 2 (PrairieCat partnership). What would be the benefits of a partnership between the organizations. Orrison said a benefit would be that as large organizations there would be vendor appeal and ways to save money. Coulter (PrairieCat) said larger organizations can also help determine development direction for new products. Orrison said RSA and PrairieCat are on different systems, but RSA is not opposed to changing their vendor. Another positive would possibly be a larger staff with room for reorganization and growth. Duttlinger (RSA) said it increases cooperative opportunities between libraries (expands our "neighborhood"). Slaughter (RAILS) said that there is more consistency in the patron experience.

Faulkner (PrairieCat) asked about the pricing structure for RSA libraries. It doesn't seem to be sustainable for option 1 or 2. Orrison said the 4 Union List libraries are charged 1,200. Basic online are charged 1,700. Orrison also pointed out that PrairieCat incorporates the OCLC fees. RSA does not deal with OCLC fees. Slaughter (RAILS) clarified that the google dashboard is used specifically for the RAILS grant. Slaughter said that if we want to look at this data for this project we can use a different lens to get a better picture. Orrison said not all libraries are OCLC members, but RSA does charge a 10% fee if a library is not a part of OCLC. Orrison said in their contract with SirsiDynix, they removed language regarding tier limitations. Orrison said RSA is in the process of changing the fee structure.

The group moved on to identify more potential challenges to a partnership.

Governance - Williams (RSA) said any type of partnership would be a large process. For either option, the RSA membership is not very active so both options would be a challenge. The governance structures are very different for both organizations. Strategic plan considerations.

Systems - Another challenge would be that both organizations are on different ILS systems.

Administrative - Coulter (PrairieCat) said I see four major issues of "burden of scale", including administrative. It is challenging to work with so many members to be nimble in regards to decision-making and especially with innovation on new technologies.

IT infrastructure – This would be a challenge to implement across a large partner organization.

Communication – Huffines (PrairieCat) said that communication among such a large membership organization would be challenging.

Sustainability – Krooswyk (PrairieCat) noted that sustainability of such a large organization would need to be considered.

Orrison (RSA) said timing may be dependent on contracts with vendors and RAILS expectations.

Faulkner (PrairieCat) said there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm and support from the membership and was pointing out that support from both RSA and PrairieCat members would be important for a successful partnership. Although most people are averse to change in the beginning.

Orrison (RSA) said that even if RSA goes with Option 1 there may be room for cooperation in the future.

Next steps

Newton summarized that the group captured the challenges and potential benefits. Newton suggests digging into those categories more in depth to discuss at a later meeting. RAILS will work with RSA and PrairieCat to facilitate a follow-up discussion.

V. Public Comments
There were no public comments.

VI. Adjournment
Meeting is adjourned at 10:57 p.m.

Next Meeting – Friday, January 6th, 2023, Talcott Free Library District, 101 E Main St, Rockton, IL