



## Illinois Heartland Library System

---

MEMO TO: IHLS Board of Directors  
 FROM: Leslie Bednar  
 DATE: September 23, 2022  
 RE: Automatic Material Handler Next Steps

At IHLS we utilize a variety of technologies to bring innovative services to our member libraries. Whether it's eliminating zip codes and volume as indicators of library delivery frequency, growing the largest automation consortium in North America, or finding proactive solutions to service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have incorporated members in the process. It's who we are. Our 521 member libraries are the motivation and impetus that push us to do better with limited tax dollars.

### **Members are Key**

As we take the next steps in our discovery work for an automatic material handler to improve delivery efficiency and effectiveness, members are included in the project and communications plan. Throughout our communications plan we have identified audiences, strategies, and tactics for messaging. Key components include:

- **Member and staff working group:** Based on our experience developing the SHARE (Sharing Heartland's Available Resources Equally) Consortium, we will form an ad hoc committee comprised of IHLS staff and IHLS member library staff. Ideally, member participation would be multi-type to learn how the AMH will streamline both IHLS and member operations, while also identifying challenges that may arise.
- **Members Matter meetings:** Beginning with our October 20, 2022, meeting, we will dedicate space in regularly scheduled networking events to gather input and provide updates to members
- **Dedicated webpage:** Including FAQs and updates
- **Infographics:** Part of our updates to members and tied to FAQs on webpage. Thumbnails to appear occasionally in newsletter, linked to webpage.
- **Launch Celebration:** To get members involved with a naming contest and create excitement.

### **Looking Ahead**

Sometimes you have to go slow to go fast. While we have gathered lots of information for this project to date, we recognize time can be our friend. Thanks to the Board's approval of our new Facilities and Operations Director candidate, we will have another staff member to lead our efforts in this endeavor. While he is getting up to speed on our processes and objectives, we can begin to meet with the member committee. Our general timeline is below and is intended to be paired with our staff communications to

---

IMAGINING TOMORROW ~ DELIVERING POSSIBILITIES TODAY!

---

members so that we are continually providing updates and seeking their feedback. As we learn more through member responses, we will be able to further clarify activities:

<b><i>When</i></b>	<b><i>Activity</i></b>
October 2022	Announce committee and seek member feedback around Members Matter meeting
November 2022	Member committee meets, reviews charge, develops member survey
January 2023	Committee finalizes member survey
February 2023	Committee reviews survey
March 2023	Committee shares recommendation with Board
April 2023	Based on board acceptance and favorable member feedback, committee begins development of Request for Proposal (RFP)
June 2023	RFP posted
July 2023	RFP responses evaluated by committee and information provided to Board

### **End Result**

Our communication plan is designed to gain as much feedback as possible about next steps while keeping an open mind to the future. We do not have a definitive answer today regarding AMH and IHLS, but our communications plan will help us identify what is best for our members and if this is the next step for the future. Either way, we mean to assure staff that an AMH is not meant to replace current IHLS employees. If we get to the place where we decide to move forward with the equipment, we will do everything we can to work with staff who may be impacted by that decision.

Thank you for your considerable interest and helpful input as we walk through this process together. As elected representatives of our membership your participation is key.