

Marketing & Communications

Member communication never ceases at IHLS. Ample coordination and skill are involved in reaching out via multiple channels to ensure our member libraries and stakeholders are informed about current trends, opportunities, and challenges. There were several projects essential to improving member outreach in FY2022: Revamping the website, prioritizing targeted member outreach, expanding our social media reach, and increasing collaboration in communications.

Website Revamp

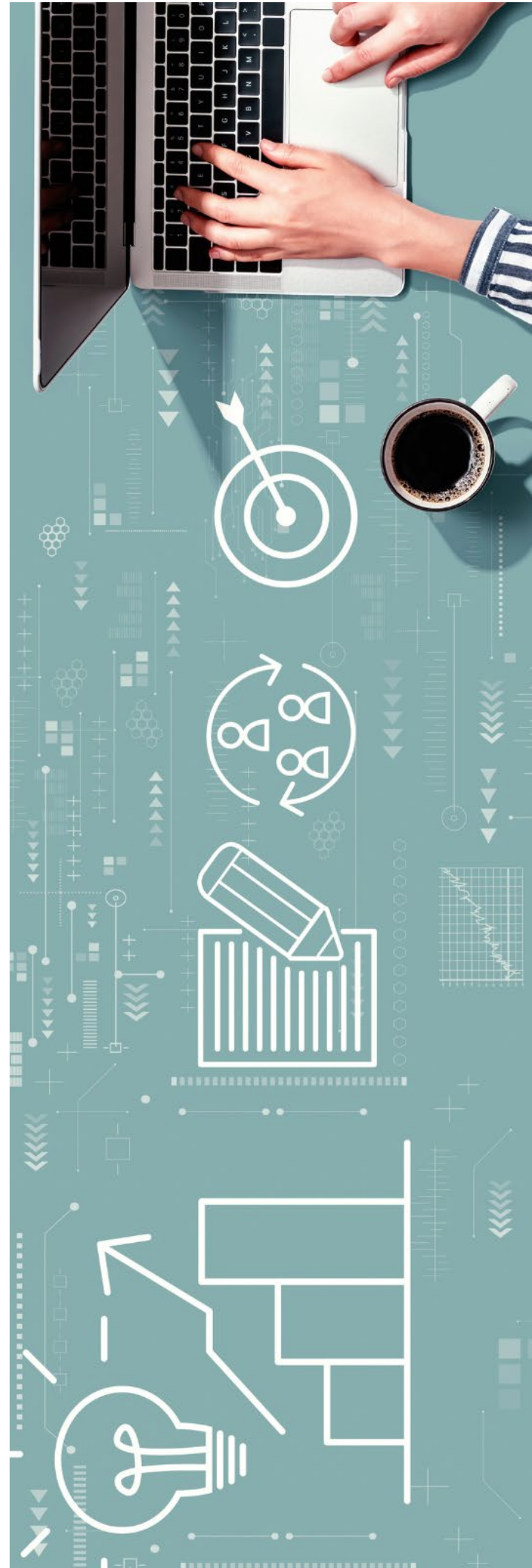
Our marketing and communications staff collaborated with IT to improve navigation and functionality of the IHLS website. At its inception several years ago, the bulk of this project was to be completed by a vendor, but several unanticipated complications left the work in the laps of IHLS staff. When the updated site is finally available, our members will find these improvements:

- A special focus area for trending topics
- A dedicated events page automatically synced with L2
- A wealth of information and resources on delivery and delivery routes
- Individual information pages for each member type

Targeted Member Outreach

We recognize the many demands on our members' time and energy, and we strive to always share accurate and timely information to assist in patron services and guide best practices. So, we prioritized several activities and resources:

- [Intellectual Freedom Challenges Resource Guide](#). This issue arose first in school member libraries, but our multi-type guide was developed and is updated with the busy librarian in mind.
- [Updated COVID-19 Resources](#). The pandemic transformed the landscape of



library work by member libraries, so we shared state and national resources as well as [updated IHLS member activities](#) related to the pandemic.

- **Member Library Technology Survey.** This was an effort to advocate for improved broadband services for public libraries.
- **SHARE Mobile App Communications Plan.** Staff developed a communications plan along with some marketing materials and resources for the launch of the [SHARE Mobile Library app](#).
- **DEI Third-Thursday Theme.** In support of continuing education on equity, diversity, and inclusion, we scheduled and promoted a broad array of DEI topics for our [Third Thursdays](#) series.
- **Library Crawl Promotion.** We supported the [3rd annual library crawl](#) with marketing resources to help members participating better promote the event.
- **[IHLS Directors Chats](#).** We modified this networking service to fit member needs. The chat frequency increased during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and

we have retained the text-chat format for greater accessibility. We save and post each chat to the website.

- **Pheedloop Pilot.** For IHLS Member Day 2021, we utilized this commercial product for an enhanced virtual learning experience.

Social Media Reach

The more we utilize social media, the better we understand its potential. Our engagement continues to increase through strategic use of these platforms. IHLS has a growing following on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, each platform serving a unique purpose. We added LinkedIn to promote our professional image and to better recruit potential employees.

Collaborative Communications

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.” Our communications and marketing staff met with each department as we developed our FY2023 Operational Plan. Their goal is to be prepared to promote projects and activities of benefit to members in a timely fashion. This cross-team support approach benefits planning throughout the organization.

Human Resources

As in all service organizations, it is the human component that often matters most. To provide exceptional customer service to our 521 member libraries, we support our 90+ staff members with appropriate compensation, meaningful work projects, and consistent feedback. Continuing education support, clear internal communication, and staff engagement efforts are vital to employee morale. In FY2022, we placed a high value on meeting staff needs with market adjustments to compensation ranges, updated employee evaluations, increased continuing education opportunities, clear internal communications, and surveys on employee morale.

Appropriate Compensation

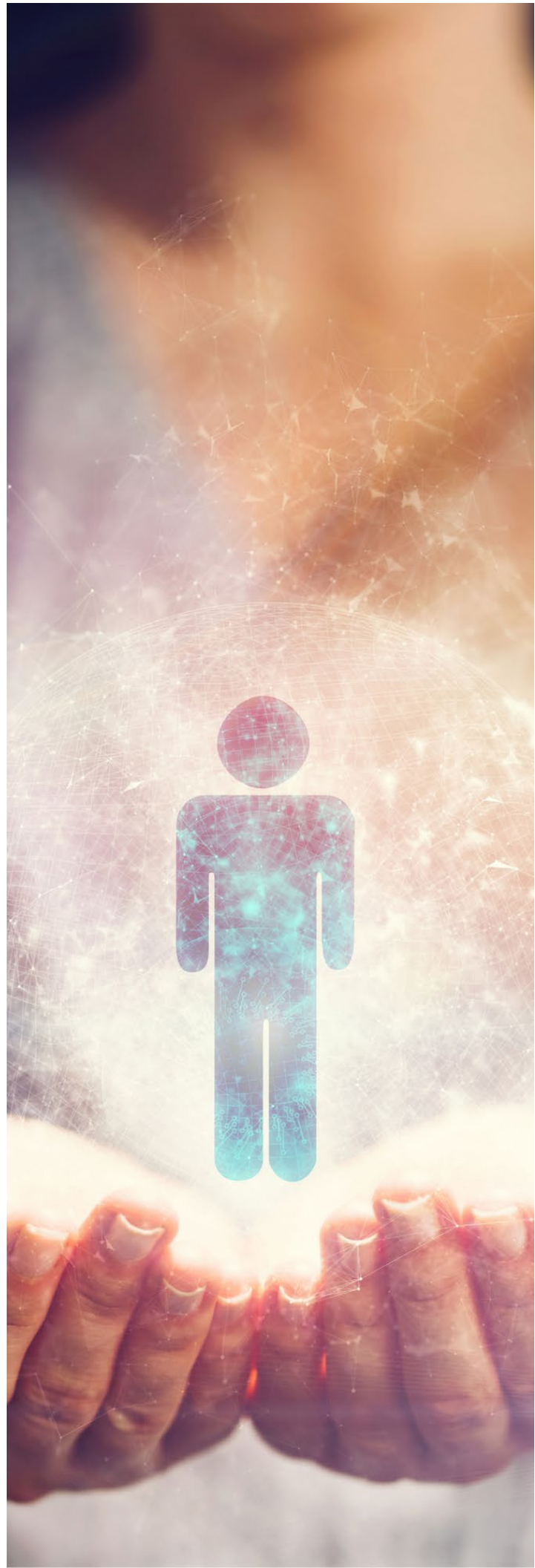
With the support of the board of directors, in FY2022, we applied market adjustments across the staff to bring individuals to an appropriate compensation level compared to peer organizations in the state. This is the second step in a multi-phase approach to attract and retain highly qualified staff who carry out the mission and goals of IHLS. Utilizing a multi-factor placement method, we can confidently place internal and external hires. Beginning in FY2021:

- we reviewed and updated, if necessary, all position descriptions;
- we contracted HR Source for a benchmarking survey, which established salary grades for each position based on industry standards; and
- a few employees received market adjustments to reach the bottom of their salary range.

Updated Evaluations

Moving forward, in FY2023, we will roll out a new staff evaluation system that:

- builds on our existing office technology with direct reports;
- includes goal setting at the agency, department, and individual levels; and



- incorporates the annual operational plan.

Continuing Education Support

Continuing education is a key support tool for all staff. In FY2022, IHLS staff had access to several online learning venues including:

- **The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness.** This is a series by Ryan Dowd on Niche Academy.
- **Gallagher Core 360 Safety Trainings.** These were available through our commercial insurance partner.
- **Pluralsight.** These are information technology-focused webinars.
- **Ford Harrison Webinars.** These were available via our association with Karen Milner, Partner, Ford Harrison. Topics included human resources, diversity, and COVID-19.
- **Pryor Learning.** Topics included management, office software, accounting, and workplace safety
- **H & H Health Associates.** This library of learning tools was available through our employee assistance program. These webinars and self-assessments included topics like interpersonal communications, emotional well-being,

and financial and legal supports included.

Internal Communications

IHLS prioritizes straightforward employee communication to engage with our team. We expanded our human resources staff intranet to remove barriers to information access. This platform allows real-time access to new policies and procedures, and regular mandatory training for all staff. The portal was particularly helpful to present the often changing and sometimes confusing guidelines of workplace health and safety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our new hire onboarding was updated with online required forms and documentation and a redesigned probation period that includes a two-way evaluation after 90 days.

Employee Morale

In FY2022, our organization was selected as a Post-Dispatch Top Workplace based on considerable staff feedback to an external, third-party survey. Through involvement with the process, we gained valuable insight on employee satisfaction, motivation, and areas for improvement. The designation demonstrates our commitment to staff and encourages us to seek more avenues to improve employee satisfaction.

Accounting

The IHLS financial team works hard to support our core services and allow us to economize our precious taxpayer support. Operating with one fewer team member in the department motivates them to improve functionality. In FY2022, our accounting staff continued to innovate, using technology to achieve savings on routine functions:

- Accounts receivable invoices are emailed instead of mailed, saving IHLS approximately \$3,000 annually
- Accounts payable checks now have a digital dual-signature review and approval process, which allows for faster processing of payment to vendors
- The Microix automated timekeeping system affords more accurate data and integrates with our financial database, saving roughly 10 work hours per payroll. It also provides more granularity in reporting and querying, which allows us to dive deeper and look at trends.

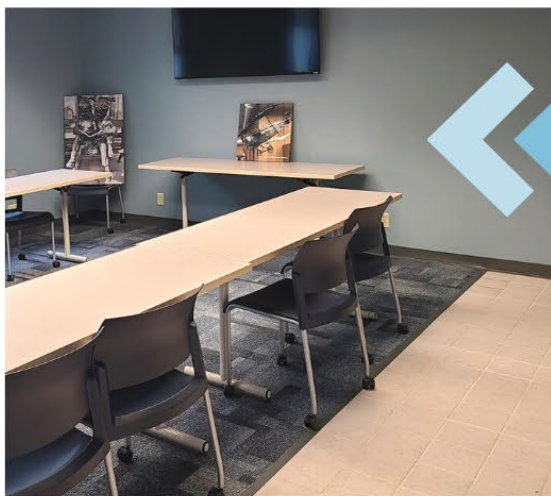
As a support function, our finance team plays an active role in all projects and services. They provide cost analyses, financial projections, and detailed reports. Using our OpenGov platform for budgeting, we present monthly balance sheet and statements of revenues and expenditures. Thanks to our growing facility with OpenGov, budget and project managers have real-time access to account information



Facilities

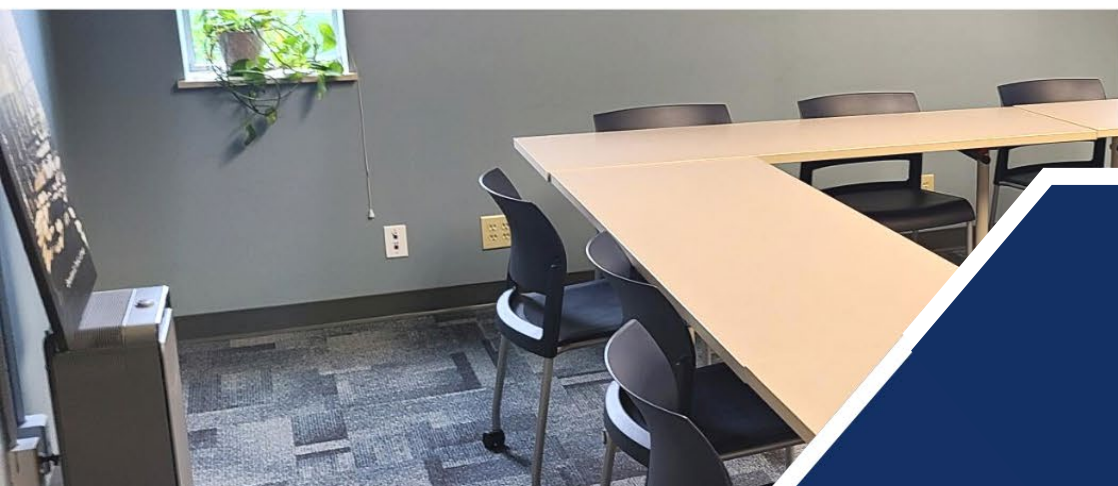
This year, Facilities oversaw updates to the downstairs kitchen in our Edwardsville building in preparation to potentially rent the room out to other organizations.

before



after

The updates included new paint, carpeting, tile, furniture, and a mounted television set to show videos and slides during trainings.



Information Technology

In our technology-driven world, it is reassuring to work with a team of IT professionals who are always willing to go the extra distance to aid IHLS and member library staff. This year, our IT department focused on supporting hybrid work, strengthening our cybersecurity, facilitating virtual events, and revamping our website.

Hybrid Work with MS Teams

Early in FY2022, the team helped IHLS staff transition from a primarily remote work environment to a hybrid model. We continue to take advantage of the technology available from Microsoft Teams, which enables our staff to communicate no matter where they are working:

- **VoIP Phones.** IHLS staff are no longer tied to desk phones as we rely on VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technology to talk any way we are logged into Teams. The switch has increased communication options with our members and made our staff more available regardless of their physical location with direct dial access.
- **Microsoft Intune.** This program allows for online software delivery and updates regardless of where a staff member is located, and it provides a better picture of staff-assigned laptops.
- **Microsoft Azure.** Our cloud functionality is significantly improved with Microsoft Azure allowing for better storage management and flexible virtual servers.

Cybersecurity

The hardware, software, and network supported by the IT team must stand up to heavy usage and constant threats. Keeping member library data safe is a key concern:

- We moved to TeamViewer to troubleshoot for IHLS and member library staff utilizing the SHARE platform.
- As we implement safeguards to stay ahead of information technology dangers with upgraded firewalls at all three offices (Carbondale, Champaign, and Edwardsville) and at our colocation facility at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Virtual Events

While many have returned to all in-person formats for events, we recognize that virtual and hybrid events offer greater accessibility for all IHLS members. Thus, we continue to join others in the virtual workspace:

- Zoom technology has served IHLS governance and members well.
- IHLS led another successful virtual Member Day in 2021 relying on the PheedLoop platform.

Website Revamp

The work of building our new website requires more than the marketing and communications staff's contributions to style and design. It also demands a heavy share of web building. In tandem with Marketing & Communications, members of the IT team are actively engaged in such work as:

- Improving back-end functionality
- Increasing the visibility of targeted events

Bibliographic Services

A hallmark of library service in Illinois is the degree to which agencies openly share their resources with each other's patrons. But how does that happen? What are the mechanics that facilitate resource sharing? IHLS supports resource sharing with three distinct services: the description of library materials via bibliographic services, the delivery of library materials between member libraries, and the maintenance of a single integrated library service platform to provide seamless collaboration within a robust organization of member libraries.

Bibliographic services, or cataloging, ensure that patrons can find the library items they need in a public access catalog quickly and easily. Cataloging is a complex, multilayered process. IHLS supports libraries across the state by providing training to support catalogers at all levels and by improving access within online catalogs for automated library groups. One could imagine cataloging as the rules of the road: they direct patrons to resources by instilling order and consistency in the description of library items, so users have a successful searching experience every time. In FY2022, IHLS Bibliographic Services sought to enhance their support with enhanced cataloging training and a partnership with an Illinois consortium for academic libraries.

Continuing Education for Member Catalogers

We serve Illinois libraries through two distinct sections of bibliographic services staff at IHLS. A primary difference between SHARE and CMC cataloging services is member library location. SHARE member libraries are in the IHLS service area, and cataloging training factors into their membership fees. By contrast, the CMC serves libraries in the IHLS service area and across the state. In FY2022, both sections of

IHLS Bibliographic Services focused on improving their cataloging training with projects and procedures targeted to their membership.

Sharing Heartland's Available Resources Equally

Sharing Heartland's Available Resources Equally (SHARE) catalogers give training and support to the 338 members of the consortium. In SHARE, member training is of paramount importance: SHARE provided member catalogers over 1,030 training hours this year. A few endeavors have helped SHARE maintain a high standard of education in FY2022:

- **Mandatory Training Hours for Members.** SHARE member library catalogers are required to participate in 15 hours of continuing education per year.
- **Increased Offerings.** Additional training was added to the online SHARE environment, minimizing member library staff's travel costs and time away from their library while increasing accessibility with the option to return to a class if necessary.

The Cataloging Maintenance Center

The Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC) catalogers are supported by a grant from the Illinois State Library (ISL) to provide services that help improve access to the resources in Illinois libraries. To do so, the CMC has maintained and improved their training with several activities:

- **Online with the CMC.** We have continued to offer these popular monthly mini-webinars featuring short, focused learning sessions followed by a question-and-answer period. In FY2022, we provided 400 training hours to libraries statewide through the series.
- **Library Conference Presentations.** CMC staff presented at state and national conferences as well as Illinois regional library conferences.

- **Multi-Week Asynchronous Courses.** CMC provided concentrated, in-depth cataloging training to over 60 library staff via our [Moodle](#) platform.

CARLI Partnership

In FY2022, IHLS began a partnership with the Consortium for Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) to improve access in

CARLI's newly upgraded integrated library system. CARLI contracted with IHLS to provide record deduplicating services for their Alma catalog platform. This allowed IHLS to hire three temporary full-time staff under the direction of the CMC to work with CARLI staff on the project.

Delivery

Library materials delivery is a service that touches each of our 521 member libraries. Provided at no cost to members, delivery and its improvements have a system-wide impact. In FY2022, we focused on a legacy system practice known as Delivery On the Go. The beauty of the Delivery On the Go method is its simplicity and speed. Libraries not at the beginning of a delivery route can have patron-requested items delivered the same day by selecting the item from a library ahead of them on the route. Previously, down-route delivery was not adopted equally in all three hubs. And, because all IHLS delivery routes are the same each day, it is easy to convey to members their options for selecting same-day delivery.

This year, we remarketed the [service](#) to members, and the impact has been impressive. The bright orange bags we designed to indicate down-route items have caught members' eyes and are frequently used. Member libraries are intentionally seeking items from libraries ahead of them on the route and placing holds. Patrons

are no longer waiting a day or two for items to arrive. The power of the “same route, same day” branding is demonstrated here where usage increased after the new promotion compared to three quarters prior:

Improvement to service provision is a focus of our delivery department. IHLS has studied the impact of automatic material handlers (AMH) in the broader library context. In FY2022, IHLS issued a Request for Information (RFI) to better understand these systems. As an RFI is a tool for making to informed decisions, an AMH can:

- Provide more accurate delivery of library materials to SHARE member libraries;
- Use label-free delivery to save SHARE members 152 miles of receipt paper; and
- Reduce IHLS staff time currently spent manually sorting over 2.6M delivery items.

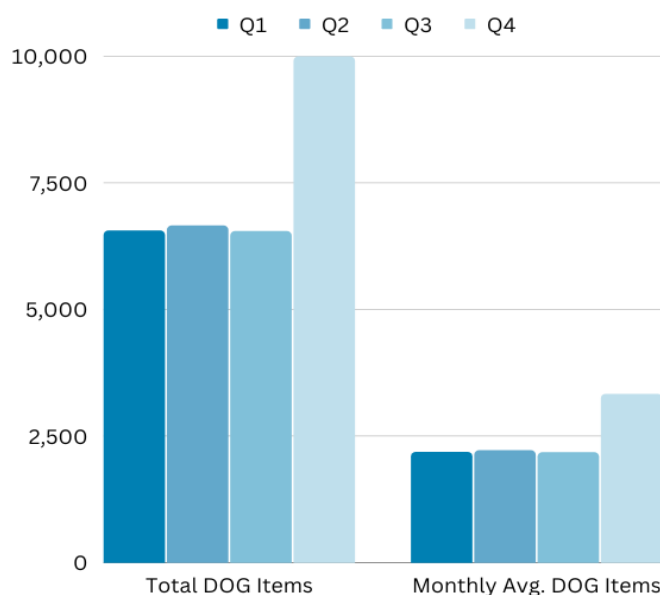


Figure 1

After we remarketed
the service in late
March, Delivery saw a
52% INCREASE
in items sent via
Delivery On the Go.

Resource Sharing with SHARE

We have a unique approach to sharing library resources at IHLS: 331 IHLS members (or nearly 65 percent of our members) share the costs of an integrated library system (ILS) to provide access to over 8.7 million items to patrons in central and southern Illinois. And, in terms of membership, SHARE is the largest resource sharing group in North America! In fact, the strength of the SHARE consortium is sometimes best viewed in numbers:

- 338 Member agencies
- 467 Member service locations
- 755,209 Member patrons
- 2,943 Member library staff
- 26 IHLS staff supporting SHARE
- \$.40 per circulating item (average cost)

Each year, the SHARE organization unveils new member services. All enhancements are vetted by SHARE members and staff through an active governance structure. This year, SHARE focused on enhancement projects including the new SHARE Mobile App, the integration of other new tools and member resources, policy updates, member engagement and communications, and added member support and training.

SHARE Mobile App

Following thorough evaluation, SHARE member libraries can offer a startup version of the app without additional member fees. This app offers curated content and recommended book lists including those from member libraries. And, for added convenience, the SHARE app easily integrates patron information for cardholders. It also offers a few features for the libraries themselves. For instance, the SHARE app rolled out with [new resources](#) including marketing materials for members to use across various channels. And, for an added fee, members may further customize the app for their library. As a result, the SHARE Mobile App

allows member libraries to better compete in the marketplace for information providers.

Other Tools & Resources

To further enhance the consortium's service to member libraries this year, SHARE staff worked to integrate several new tools and resources:

- Introduction of McNaughton Book Leasing for SHARE members
- Promotion of a new service called Biblio+
- Offered CollectionHQ DEI Analysis Tool
- cloudLibrary data analysis: collection saw substantial growth thanks to an FY2021 grant, included benchmarks of how SHARE uses cloudLibrary, return on investment and comparison to similarly sized groups (see figure 2)

Policy Improvements

SHARE staff also helped improve the experience of member library patrons and the safety of members themselves this year. To do so, they implemented a few policy changes:

- Common Loan Guidelines: launched to help encourage consistency in lending periods and renewals
- SHARE Data Privacy and Protection Policy: introduced as a response to
- Extended billing period for damaged or lost items: as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic member libraries could extend the billing period to 18 months

Member Engagement and Communications

Timely communications and member engagement are key to retaining members. So, SHARE staff implemented several new strategies for communication and engagement:

- Hosted virtual 10th birthday party for SHARE's 10th anniversary
- Patron engagement content: including most requested items, cloudLibrary readers advisory content such as shelves and social media, patron facing highlights page
- Downtime alerts: created new service through RAINEDOUT to quickly share news regarding interruptions of service

Support & Training

SHARE staff also extended further support and training for several new and old initiatives:

- Support and training of Polaris reporting module
- Announcement and support during retirement of the Internet Explorer browser which changed members' remote access to the Polaris platform
- Member library support of Illinois library initiatives Cards for Kids and Cards for Vets
- School library member support as they complied with SOPPA (the Illinois Student Online Personal Protection Act)

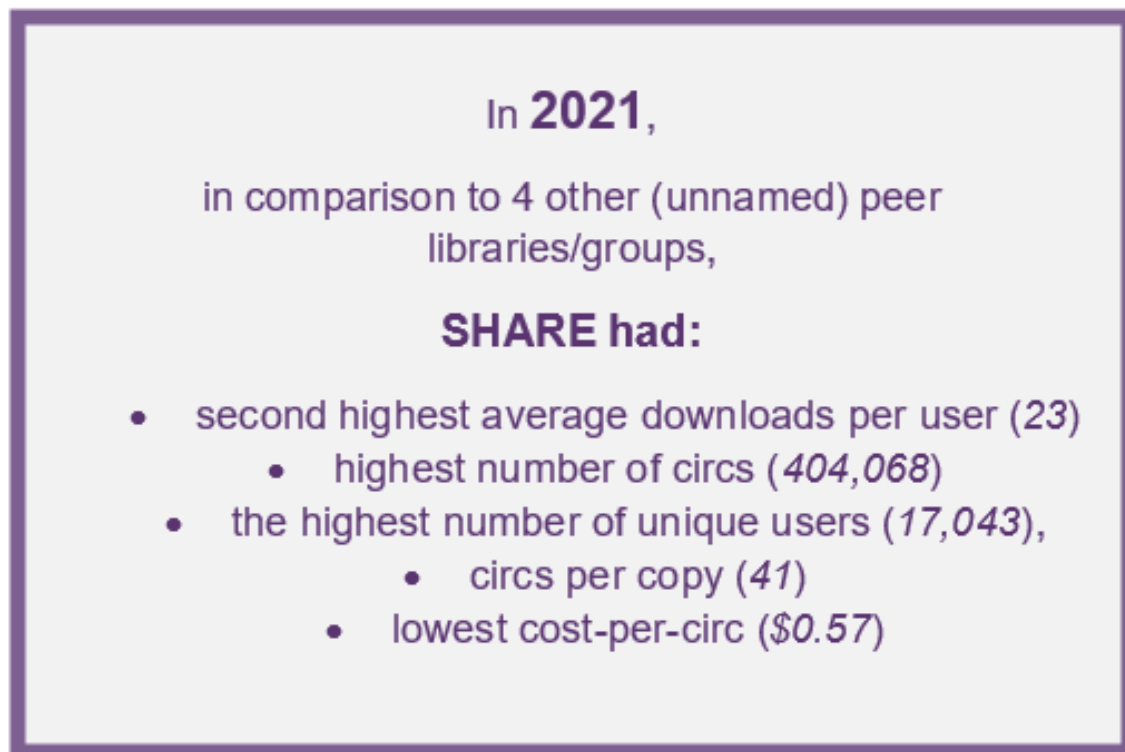


Figure 2

Membership

Everything we do at IHLS is in support of members as they provide excellent service to their patrons—from elementary school to college students in academic institutions, individuals in correctional facilities and other special libraries, toddler lap-sit to senior book clubs in public libraries. A primary goal of membership services is to “support member libraries in their efforts to provide excellent library service to their stakeholders.” This support takes many shapes and comes from professional membership staff who specialize in working with multi-type libraries.

This year, we wanted to share more grant information of interest to our members, to build relationships with agencies that can benefit our members, and to better participate in the larger Illinois library community. To do so, we focused on making site visits to new member directors, facilitating continuing education and networking, collaborate to better support school libraries, and meeting members where they are through conference attendance.

Site Visits to New Directors

At IHLS, we find that site visits to new library directors are invaluable! Our membership team’s visits help put a friendly “face” on system staff. Meeting us personally helps them feel even more welcome to contact us whenever they need assistance. Additionally, these visits allow us to hand directors a helpful information packet while we provide more information about IHLS and the Illinois library community for those who need it. Although we always aim to reach or surpass our annual goal of visiting 20 percent of our member libraries, the COVID-19 pandemic has stood in our way for the last several years. IHLS tried to hold these visits via ZOOM at the height of the pandemic, but virtual visits proved less useful. We find that in-person visits open more conversations than virtual visits. For instance, directors are far more likely to bring up more of their concerns, allowing us

more opportunities to help or answer their questions. As restrictions eased in FY2022, we could finally return to in-person visits. This year, we completed 60 site visits to:

- one academic library,
- 23 public libraries,
- 34 school libraries, and
- two special libraries.

Continuing Education & Networking

Because our member library staff are at their best when they are informed and up to date on issues facing libraries, we strive to provide timely adult education programs at no cost to members (when possible). Some highlights among these opportunities were our 2021 Member Day, our Members Matter & Directors’ Chats sessions, and our Human Resources webinars.

Member Day

The best example is our signature annual event, Member Day. [Celebrating Libraries, Building Partnerships](#) was the theme for our second virtual Member Day in November 2021. We utilized a multi-function platform, which gave more functionality and greatly reduced the tasks required for self-hosting. The virtual event is quite popular with members, and while we miss gathering in person, we appreciate the benefits of a virtual mode:

- two keynote speakers
- nine breakout sessions
- a Lunch and Learn with four mini-sessions
- a school library track with professional development hours available
- a public library trustee track with four sessions available
- a virtual exhibit hall with a variety of information vendors

- access to session recordings for registered attendees
- the ability to track attendance for prizes
- a cookie break (we send cookies to attendees ahead of time)

Members Matter & Directors' Chats

At IHLS, the continuing education and networking opportunities for members are only bounded by time, funding, and creativity. This year, we shared our continuing education calendars with members at regular intervals. To develop those calendars, we set sessions at least six months in advance. And, to help members better plan for the sessions, we created Third Thursdays for Members Matter opportunities. On all other Thursdays, we conduct text-based Directors Chats. The membership team continues to support member libraries with a breadth of programming under the Members Matter banner. When possible, the [sessions are recorded](#) for additional participation. Through this series alone, IHLS provided 820 continuing-education hours. Our 2022 Members Matter calendar included:

- July 15: Grant Writing and the American Recovery Act Grants (80 registered attendees)
- August 19: The Impact of Building Inclusive Communities in Rural Illinois (49 registered attendees)
- September 16: Broadband and Illinois Libraries (47 registered attendees)
- October 21: Think Forward, Not Straight: Understanding the LGBTQ+ Spectrum (66 registered attendees)
- January 20: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Part One (52 registered attendees)
- February 17: Grant Writing: Hints, Hacks and Hopes (35 registered attendees)
- March 17: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Part Two (32 registered attendees)
- April 21: The Grant that Became a Collaboration (25 registered attendees)

- May 19: Serving Those with Memory Loss and Their Care Givers (37 registered attendees)
- June 16: Maintaining Your Library Facility (24 registered attendees)

As is evident, there was an equity, diversity, and inclusion theme running through the entire Members Matter series. We are committed to increasing member library knowledge of the many types of diversity they may encounter in their communities, so they can better serve their communities.

Human Resources Webinars

Human resources administration is a facet of every library director's job, and for the second year in a row, IHLS partnered with HR Source to make a series of webinars available at a low cost for members:

- Crisp, Clear and Concise: A Formula for Effective Communication
- Effective Delegation
- Legal Issues for Supervisors

Collaborating to Serve School Libraries

We view active collaboration with professional groups as part of our mission. A useful example of this is our support for school libraries in a working group with the Association for Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE). This partnership is comprised of representatives from AISLE, IHLS, the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS), the Illinois State Library, and ILA. Monthly meetings have allowed stakeholders to discuss such topics as intellectual freedom challenges and the lack of good data about Illinois school libraries. The benefit to the Illinois school community is significant in that efforts to provide service are conducted with a statewide focus. As a result, of these collaborative efforts, we added a school library liaison to our membership team and joined a mission to collect better data on Illinois school libraries.

Adding a School Library Liaison

Our efforts with the AISLE working group were supported by an addition to the IHLS membership team. We brought on a school library liaison in January, and her value has been apparent since her work began—from her reaching out during the certification period to her participation in networking groups to her efforts to make site visits. In short, our school library liaison has made our school libraries aware that they are a valuable part of the system and that their input matters.

Improving School Library Data

In our meetings with AISLE, we determined that poor data about Illinois school libraries, particularly in staffing, is of critical concern. For instance, Illinois could not be included in a recent national study about school libraries because the data available through the Illinois State Board of Education was so poor. Our colleagues at RAILS brought in staff to work on this problem specifically. This has been a focus of the working group, and the input from the IHLS school library liaison has been crucial to the progress of this initiative. The annual certification process in FY2022 was an opportunity to start to remedy the situation. Questions for schools were added that dealt with staffing, collection size and budget. Much

work has been done since then to clarify that data that was collected through certification.

Conference Participation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many organizations to pivot to programming in a virtual environment. This year we had more of a mixed experience in networking and conference participation. IHLS has several member-driven networking groups who persevered through the pandemic and now are beginning to offer in-person networking opportunities. As with visits to libraries with new directors, our staff are thrilled to participate regardless of the format. Our staff also exhibited and presented at conferences within the state virtually and in person: the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Annual Conference, the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE) Annual Conference, and Reaching Forward South. Staff presentations help establish our staff's ethos as experts in their fields. And when we exhibit at a conference, we further support the organization by sponsoring a specific component of conference programming. In addition, IHLS staff also present at webinars for professional associations.