

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held on
January 09, 2023
at William Hall Library
Program Room, Lower Level
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

Members Attending: John Bucci, Aaron Coutu, Rosita Hopper, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Leslie Page, Robert Sloan

Members Absent: Cristina Amedeo, Heidi Blais, Melody Drnach (Chair), Annette Feldman, Kenneth Findlay, Louise Herrington, Marcus Mitchell, Doug Norris, Amanda Richman

Present from the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS): Karen Andrews, Nicolette Baffoni, Karen Mellor

Guests: None

Materials Distributed:

- Proposed Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Fiscal Year 2024 Draft

I. WELCOME

Dr. Hopper called the meeting to order at 4:19 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the November 21, 2022, meeting

Moved By: Mr. Bucci

Seconded By: Mr. Coutu

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. REPORT OF THE VICE-CHAIR

Vice-Chair Dr. Hopper chaired the meeting and welcomed members.

Dr. Hopper reported the RI Library Association (RILA) Intellectual Freedom Committee will schedule a discussion about reproductive health, libraries navigating new information landscapes, and misinformation and disinformation challenges surrounding children and young adult resources.

The 2023 RI Center for the Book (RICB) Reading Across RI (RARI) book choice is *True Biz* by Sara Novic. The book focuses on deaf culture in a deaf high school. Dr. Hopper hopes to lead a book discussion at Johnson and Wales University. The 2023 RARI virtual kick-off is February 1 at 7:00pm at Salve Regina University's Pell Center. Nancy Maguire Heath, Director, Rhode Island School for the Deaf and Amanda Montgomery, Chief Legal Officer with Convo Communications, LLC and Board Chair, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, are this year's honorary chairs. A 'Meet the Author' event is scheduled for April 27.

RARI 2023 book sets may be requested from Mr. Bucci. Ms. Baffoni reported that a virtual 'Educator Night' will be scheduled for educators who want to use the book in classrooms.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. Staffing

Chelsea Watts, OLIS' new Digital Resource Coordinator began on January 3. Ms. Watts will work on digital initiatives, the OLIS website, and with Mr. Morales-Henry on the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) RI Hub.

Chaichin Chen, Resource Sharing Coordinator, retired on December 31 after 26 years; an OLIS website [announcement](#) cites her numerous OLIS contributions. The vacated position will be posted once evaluated and readjusted to meet current agency needs.

ii. Budget

OLIS' annual Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA) award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) will increase by \$173,000 for use in state fiscal year 2024; this brings OLIS' award to the \$1M base grant plus an additional amount calculated on population in accordance with legislation sponsored by Senator Jack Reed. OLIS' total award will be \$1.4M. The additional funds will be used for grant programs and/or statewide initiatives.

OLIS is planning a round of discretionary grants in FY23/24 using LSTA funds. Ms. Baffoni described a process to create a bank of easily executed and impactful projects that libraries can consider ("copycat grants" modeled on prior grant awards).

An [ARPA grants funding report](#) has been posted on the OLIS website.

iii. Programming

The Continuing Education (CE) spring program calendar has been posted. Additional program topics that may be added to the schedule are library trustee training, leadership training, library policy formation, and intellectual freedom.

B. Grants: State Aid & Library of RI (LORI)

Public libraries will receive 25% in grant-in-aid (GIA) funding for FY23; additional funding was also provided to the Statewide Reference Resource Center (AskRI) which enables OLIS to continue to provide resources first secured with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. A request to fund grant-in-aid at 25% for FY24 was submitted to the budget office based on FY23 library funding. OLIS is cautiously optimistic that GIA will be funded at 25% for FY24.

C. Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) RI Hub Update

OLIS will meet with the Digital Public Library of America on January 24 regarding the application process for becoming a state hub; the application to become a hub will be submitted in the spring. The RI-DPLA partners have identified collections for inclusion in the inaugural collection that will fully meet the minimum requirement of 50,000 digital objects.

D. Library of RI (LORI) Delivery

OLIS noted a substantial drop in school library participation in interlibrary loan (ILL) delivery. As reported by Ms. Blais at the November meeting, libraries are unable to accurately determine materials available in other school libraries using the current Follett school catalog. OLIS is

discussing with the RI Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK) how OLIS may aid RILINK in moving to a more unified and discoverable catalog. RILINK may survey members about their needs and the current catalog.

Mr. Coutu inquired if the RI Department of Education (RIDE) had grant money specific to technology available to assist with a new statewide school library catalog. Dr. Lynch advised that federal and state RIDE funds are reserved for specific purposes and is not aware of technology funds that could be applied to a new statewide school library catalog.

Dr. Hopper read Section B of RI General Law § 29-6-1 referencing state aid to libraries, and noted the policy includes all libraries including academic, public, school and special libraries. Dr. Lynch suggested the LBRI investigate putting together a proposal to RIDE with the support of one or more school districts. Dr. Lynch can help coordinate a meeting with RIDE officials to discuss such a proposal.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. [Minimum Standards for RI Public Libraries](#)

The committee to study Minimum Standards for RI Public Libraries has yet to convene. There is no current news to report.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

i. Federal & State Legislative Updates

Federal and State legislation about libraries may be found on the OLIS legislative [webpage](#).

i. Rhode Island Legislation

No new state library legislation was discussed.

Mr. Coutu reported the RI Library Association (RILA) Legislative Action committee is considering library issues for 2023 promotion. Issues under consideration include 25% GIA funding for public libraries, AskRI service level-funding, eBook cost and availability, and universal digital resources and broadband availability. RILA will support legislation providing liability protection to library staff from legal ramifications surrounding censorship issues.

ii. Federal Legislation

No new federal library legislation was discussed.

VII. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

A. Mr. Coutu

On January 5, 2023, the RI American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sent the Warwick Public Library Board of Trustees a [letter](#) referencing the Warwick Public Library Community & Meeting Rooms [policy](#). The letter requested action to remove language the ACLU deemed a violation of the US Constitution's [First Amendment](#), and contrary to the intellectual freedom policies of the American Library Association. (ALA). The letter was sent in response to a complaint initiated by a former City of Warwick councilperson. The policy item in question is the provision that the Board of Trustees has the authority to cancel any meeting at any time for any reason.

The meeting policy statement in question had been under review by Mr. Coutu, Director, Warwick Public Library and the Warwick Public Library Board of Trustees. The requested action will be addressed at the next Warwick Public Library Board of Trustees meeting

Ms. Mellor reported that calls from librarians about meeting room policies have increased following recent programs that have drawn protests in their communities. Cranston Public Library recently updated their meeting room policy to reflect that public meeting materials are not endorsed or sponsored by the library.

Ms. Baffoni reported on an intellectual freedom workshop by an attorney/librarian at a recent conference. OLIS is planning a library workshop series with the same presenter, who provided an excellent overview on the issues and practical recommendations for libraries.

Ms. Baffoni reported that Kate Lenz, Director for the RI Center for the Book, was approached by the ALA about becoming a RI affiliate of the Unite Against BookBans initiative. Ms. Lenz contacted OLIS about this initiative and sharing information with schools and local governments.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Library Grant-in-Aid (GIA)

The board reviewed and discussed the proposed FY24 GIA submitted to the RI Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Ms. Mellor explained FY24 GIA library funding increases and decreases.

Narragansett's Maury Loontjens Memorial Library (NAR) realized a major decrease in municipal funding in FY21 that was restored in FY2022; the municipal funding restoration increased the library's state funding substantially, but the increase has resulted in decreased GIA funding from FY23 for some other public libraries based on the current library funding formula and lower than average or no increases in their municipal funding.

Ms. Mellor proposed an ad hoc committee to study the current public library GIA formula to determine its equitability. RI General Law [§ 29-6-2](#) provides GIA state funding equal to 25% of municipal library funding. A 2008 addition to the law states that an amount less than 25% of local expenditures and appropriations may be funded if the state budget does not allow for full 25% funding.

Moved By: Mr. Coutu

Seconded By: Ms. Nazareth-Dzialo

Temporary committee formation to study the current public library GIA formula was approved. Ms. Mellor, Ms. Page, Mr. Sloan, and Mr. Coutu will be seated on the committee. Kelly Metzger, OLIS State Data Coordinator, will provide data to the committee. The board will issue a committee charge.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2023, from 4:15 – 5:45 p.m., William Hall Library, at 1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905. Board members will be notified of date or venue changes.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By: Ms. Nazareth-Dzialo

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.