

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND⁴
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held
September 18, 2023
at William Hall Library
Program Room, Lower Level
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

Members Attending: Aaron Coutu, Melody Drnach (Chair), Kenneth Findlay, Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: Jessica David, Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Doug Norris, Tien Tran

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed:

- Proposed Meeting Schedule 2023-2024
- H5148-S0498 Letter of Support 2023
- H6324 Letter of Opposition 2023
- H6066 Letter of Support 2023

I. WELCOME

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:24 pm.

II. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Motion to move Chair Report to agenda Item II:

Moved By: Mr. Coutu

Seconded By: Mr. Findlay

Agenda change approved.

Ms. Drnach explained general board procedures that include [Robert's Rules of Order](#). Ms. Drnach directed members to the Washington Post article '[Red states quit nation's oldest library group amid culture war over books](#)' by Hannah Natanson. LBRI members introduced themselves and signified their library representation affiliation. Members were requested to notify Ms. Andrews of meeting attendance.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the June 12, 2023, meeting

Moved By: Ms. Page

Seconded By: Mr. Coutu

The minutes were approved as presented.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. State Budget

The FY25 state budget planning is now underway. Ms. Mellor requested current level of service funding for 13 full-time employees (FTE). Grant-in-aid (GIA) was requested at the 25% statutory level; GIA was funded at 25% in 2022 and 2023. A small increase was requested for AskRI to cover certain contractual increases.

The OLIS budget is part of the Department of Administration budget that is prepared for the Governor; the Governor will introduce a proposed state budget by the end of January. The General Assembly is anticipated to pass its amended version of the state budget by the end of June, which will then be transmitted to the Governor for final approval.

ii. OLIS Website & Enterprise Technology Strategy & Services (ETSS)

OLIS' new [website](#) launched on July 6; please contact [Mr. Morales Henry](#) or [Ms. Mellor](#) with any feedback. Ms. Mellor oversees the Enterprise Technology Strategy & Services team managing the state's websites and Microsoft (MS) applications.

iii. Board Orientation & LBRI Handbook

Ms. Mellor conducted a LBRI orientation session today with three new members; remaining new members will be oriented over the next few weeks. The digitized LBRI [handbook](#) is posted on the OLIS website; please contact Ms. Andrews for a physical copy.

B. OLIS Projects

i. Continuing Education (CE)

A library survey was conducted over the summer to inform OLIS planning for the upcoming CE session; 40-50 responses were received. OLIS provides ongoing professional development opportunities for youth and adult services librarians through roundtables and programs. Specialized sessions in the upcoming year include leadership and management training for library staff. A prior service provider will create a series of virtual asynchronous training modules on strategic planning for the OLIS Online Learning Center on Niche Academy. Other sessions will be developed in response to identified needs.

ii. Library Field Service Visits

OLIS professional staff are conducting field service visits to learn more about the accomplishments and challenges of public libraries and to gather feedback on OLIS' services and programs. Additionally, staff will focus on the importance of library policies specifically associated with public meeting space and collections. A summary of the visits will be compiled for the Board.

iii. Public Library Annual Survey (PLAS) & Library of RI (LORI) Annual Certification

The public library annual survey opened on July 17 and ends September 15. The process gathers data for federal reporting, certifies prior and current year GIA applications, and certifies compliance with public library standards.

LORI standards certification runs simultaneously with the PLAS to qualify all types of libraries for statewide delivery and resource sharing. The submission deadline is September 15 for most libraries and September 29 for school libraries. To date, three new school libraries will join the delivery schedule this year.

iv. Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS) Site Visit

A program officer from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) visited OLIS on July 18-20 for a standard five-year review of the use of Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. The representative visited eight libraries to see LORI grant projects in action. IMLS recommended that OLIS add an English language learner policy to its policies; OLIS will work with the state to identify any existing English language learner policy that may be adopted. As a primarily library development agency, OLIS does not serve the public directly other than through the Talking Books Library; two OLIS Talking Books Library staff are native Spanish speakers who are available to assist patrons.

v. Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), Rhode Island Hub

Project work is continuing, but it is taking longer than expected to bring together the various components for the project launch. Brown University will host the technology stack for the RI DPLA hub portal, with the final details worked out this summer. The initial launch will include existing collections that showcase RI history and culture. The statewide project is being coordinated by OLIS in partnership with Providence Public Library and Brown University Library. As the project develops, OLIS will seek participation from contributing members on various committees that will help guide development of the Digital Library of Rhode Island (D-LORI).

vi. Statewide Reference Resource Center (SRRC)

Providence Public Library serves as the SRRC managing AskRI, the platform hosting Udemy, Mango Languages, Learning Express, EBSCO, WorldBook, Tutor and other learning tools and databases. OLIS funded SRRC with \$1.1 million in FY24 which this year includes additional funding for promotion. OLIS is working with AskRI database vendors and the RI Department of Education (RIDE) to promote higher use of learning tools by students. Current vendor promotions include educational sessions, product training and promotional campaigns. Board input on promotion of resources is welcome.

vii. Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA) Grants

A new round of LSTA grants will launch in November for projects to be executed between January and August 2024.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Letters on Pending Legislation (Mr. Coutu)

Mr. Coutu will email support and opposition letters to the board for review. Motions will be tabled until October.

i. Intellectual Freedom Challenges: H [6066](#) and H [6324](#)

RI Library Association (RILA) promotes and supports H6066 that protects librarians and teachers from prosecution under obscenity laws for work performed as part of their professions. RILA opposes H6324 as it adds graphic novels and comics to obscenity laws.

ii. eBook Pricing: S [498](#) and H [5148](#)

Pricing for library eBook purchases by libraries is significantly higher than public eBook purchase prices; this legislation would require publishers to provide reasonable pricing for libraries purchasing eBooks.

B. LBRI Legislative Committee

Ms. Mellor recommended that interested members join the LBRI Legislative Committee. Mr. Coutu currently serves as the sole member.

C. Ad Hoc Committee on State Aid to Libraries Funding Formula

Ms. Mellor reviewed the history of the committee's study of the public library grant-in-aid (GIA) funding formula, which is based on municipal expenditures on libraries. The funding formula is being reviewed by the committee, along with municipal funding for libraries; a board review in 2017 produced a substantial report on this topic and is available on the OLIS website. The 2017 report recommended that the formula remain in place to support systemwide borrowing and lending. GIA has been funded at the state-mandated 25% for the last two fiscal years but had been funded below the statutory level for 14 years prior.

D. [Public Library Minimum Standards](#)

Ms. Page, Ms. Space, Mr. Coutu, Mr. La Roux, and Mr. Ed Garcia, Director, Cranston Public Library, will be seated on a committee to review the public library minimum standards and report to the board. Committee representation of all types of public libraries is optimal and OLIS will add to the committee to ensure that representation. Librarians and library staff will be requested to provide feedback on the committee findings. Those activities will be followed by the state regulatory process which includes public hearings.

Ms. Drnach inquired about public library funding data at 25% versus 22%. Ms. Mellor advised that funding data will be compiled by Ms. Kelly Metzger, State Data Coordinator, from annual report data and compiled for the LBRI. The data will be used as an assessment tool by the committee. Meeting dates will be forthcoming.

Ms. Mellor noted the [LORI Standards](#) also need review, especially with respect to school needs and participation in the network.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Federal & State Legislative Updates

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

i. Rhode Island Legislation (Mr. Coutu)

RI legislation was discussed in 'Unfinished Business', Item A.

ii. Federal Legislation

A federal government shutdown is pending. In these circumstances, OLIS requests reimbursement of expenditures that will cover the period up until the potential shutdown.

VII. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

A. Mr. Findlay

Mr. Findlay inquired about the OLIS trustee handbook, and if library construction funding is available. Ms. Mellor advised that OLIS staff is working on the trustee handbook that will be reported to the board upon completion. There are two current library construction projects in-process, in Jamestown and Narragansett; libraries may apply for construction funding.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

Future meetings will be held on Monday from 4 – 5:30 p.m. The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2023, from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m., at William Hall Library, 1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905. Members will be notified of date or venue changes.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By: Mr. La Roux

Seconded By: Mr. Coutu

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.