

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held
November 20, 2023
at William Hall Library
Program Room, Lower Level
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

Members Attending: John Bucci, Aaron Coutu-Jones, Melody Drnach (Chair), Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Doug Norris, Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian, Tien Tran, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: Jessica David, Kenneth Findlay, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed:

- Proposed Meeting Schedule 2023-2024 REV01

I. WELCOME

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:14 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the September 18, 2023, meeting

Moved By: Mr. Coutu-Jones

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Ms. Drnach invited board members to introduce themselves and indicate the patrons they represent.

Ms. Drnach requested a motion to appoint Mr. Coutu-Jones the Vice-Chair.

Moved By: Mr. Norris

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

Mr. Coutu was approved as LBRI Vice-Chair.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. Public Library Annual Survey

The public library annual survey closed on September 15. The data-gathering survey allows libraries to apply for state grant-in-aid (GIA) and certifies prior year expenditures. GIA is

based on expenditure of municipal appropriations and private library endowments. Some municipalities experienced challenges with completing the financial section of the application due to changes implemented this year.

In 2013, OLIS began allowing libraries to optionally report municipal appropriations and expenditures on library services that were not included in the library's actual budget (e.g., employee benefits, facilities services such as grass-cutting and snow removal, etc.). These expenditures were deemed local expenditures on library services and as such could be included in the calculation for state aid. In subsequent years, to increase transparency, the optional worksheet for determining such expenditures was made mandatory for any municipality seeking to include municipal expenditures on library services outside the library's budget. OLIS is currently reviewing these expenditures and the process for certifying them; board input is welcome.

Ms. Tashjian inquired about the impact of improper GIA worksheet completion. Ms. Mellor advised GIA funds are allocated solely on municipal appropriations and expenditures and granted in accordance with RIGL 29-6-2.

OLIS will submit FY25 GIA calculation to the state later this month, which will be shared with the board when available.

B. Federal & National Updates

i. Federal Government Shutdown

Congress averted a federal shutdown in October and again recently. OLIS prepares for potential shutdowns by drawing down enough federal funds to meet agency needs for a 30-day period, the maximum allowable under federal law.

ii. Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)

OLIS hosted the COSLA 50th annual meeting from October 29 – November 1 in Newport. Ms. Mellor and guests toured the Providence Athenaeum and visited the Providence Public Library following the meeting.

iii. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Reauthorization

Approximately 40% of OLIS' budget is federally funded through the Library Services and Technology Act, which is authorized under the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA). The MLSA expires in September 2025. Senator Jack Reed has been the lead sponsor of the previous two MLSA reauthorizations and is anticipated to be the lead sponsor on the next reauthorization. Ms. Mellor worked with Senator Reed's office on the last reauthorization.

At the COSLA meeting, Ms. Mellor facilitated a conversation between Senator Reed and Crosby Kemper, Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which included a discussion about the upcoming reauthorization. The prior MLSA authorization increased the base state grant to \$1,000,000.

Mr. Ed Garcia, Director, Cranston Public Library, and chair of the American Library Association (ALA) Committee on Legislation has convened a national committee to

recommend updates to MLSA; Ms. Mellor has been appointed to this committee. Mr. Garcia facilitated a session at the COSLA meeting to solicit input from the chief officers on MLSA.

iv. National Library Legislative Day

COSLA and the American Library Association (ALA) will partner to host a library legislative day on March 6-7, 2024, in Washington, DC. With COSLA's support, the event will move from an invitation-only event coordinated and funded by ALA to an event that is open to all states. The new event, Voices for Libraries, will include ALA invitees from key states and chief officers and their guests from any state interested in participating; attendees other than ALA invitees will need to fund their own participation. As more information is made available, Ms. Mellor will advise on options for LBRI representation at the event.

C. Field Service Visits to Public Libraries

OLIS staff visited 47 of 48 public libraries during the fall, meeting with library directors to better understand the current successes and challenges of public libraries, as well as promoting and fielding any questions on OLIS services and programs. Ms. Mellor will visit the Providence Public Library to complete the schedule. The biggest issue facing libraries is securing professional staff, particularly youth service librarians. Several directors observed that staff sometimes leave their jobs for better paying positions in neighboring states. Statistics about librarian profession retention rates are not available. Librarians indicated leadership and managements skills are sometimes lacking in graduates and expressed much interest in trustee training. Libraries also indicated confusion about what services are provided by OLIS and Ocean State Libraries (OSL).

OLIS is compiling data from the visits and the annual survey to be shared with the board.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Federal & State Legislative Updates

Library legislative information may be found on the OLIS legislation [webpage](#).

i. Rhode Island Legislation

RI legislation is discussed in Unfinished Business.

ii. Federal Legislation

No federal legislation was discussed.

VII. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

A. Ms. Tashjian

The RI Commerce Corporation is expected to issue the RI Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) plan draft in December; there will be a 30-day public comment period. Libraries have had a key role in the planning and are encouraged to comment. Rhode Island is anticipated to receive a substantial amount of federal funds for digital skills training, broadband, and technology.

Ms. Tashjian is tasked with the implementation of a survey process to gather data on underserved populations for the state's Digital Equity plan. Incentives will be provided for survey completion and on-site support will be available. Contact Ms. Tashjian to have your library as a location for participation in the survey. Ms. Mellor advised that OLIS will assist with engaging libraries in this activity and will follow-up with Ms. Tashjian.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Letters on Legislation

Mr. Coutu-Jones revised LBRI draft letters of testimony for intellectual freedom challenge bills H [6066](#) and H [6324](#) and eBook pricing bills S [498](#) and H [5148](#). The letters will be tabled pending further legislative action. H6066 will likely be reintroduced, and the eBook pricing bills revised to align more closely with new consumer protection laws.

B. [Public Library Minimum Standards](#)

No new information was discussed on the Public Library Minimum Standards.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Sub-Grants (Ms. Baffoni)

OLIS will offer two simultaneous LORI grant rounds with Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. Large project grants will be \$10,000-\$27,000 and mini-grants \$2,500-\$7,500. The grant application process opens November 27 and closes December 22. OLIS utilizes the state's grant management system but has customized the application to more closely align with OLIS' grant program. Grant application review will take place in early January. Mr. Bucci, Mr. Norris, Ms. Steever, and Ms. Wodehouse volunteered to review LSTA applications.

B. Public Library Annual Survey – Grant-in-Aid (GIA)

Ms. Mellor reviewed potential FY25 GIA state aid allocations based on annual survey data and the statutory 25% funding formula. She noted that in some communities' libraries do not expend their full local appropriation; this in turn lowers the amount of state aid the community receives as aid is based on the lesser of appropriations and expenditures. Some libraries may thus receive less aid than in FY24. The board discussed per capita municipal library expenditures and challenges facing the state's distressed communities. If funded at the 25% statutory rate, FY25 will increase by about \$350,000.

Ms. Mellor is empowered by statute to determine the distribution of state aid.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for December 11, 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. Norris

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

The meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.