

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held
February 12, 2024
at William Hall Library
Program Room, Lower Level
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

Members Attending: John Bucci, Jessica David, Melody Drnach (Chair), Laura Kohl, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Tien Tran, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: Aaron Coutu, Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Kenneth Findlay, Christopher La Roux, Doug Norris, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed:

- RI House, State Aid to Libraries ([H7335](#))
- RI House, Freedom to Read ([H7386](#))
- Legislative Report, February 2024
- 2023 State Program Report, Year in Review

I. WELCOME

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the January 08, 2024, meeting

Moved By: Mr. Bucci

Seconded By: Ms. Page

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. REPORT OF THE VICE CHAIR

Ms. Drnach welcomed members.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. Governor's Budget

The Governor's FY25 budget was released at the end of January. OLIS was funded at its current service level, including 13 fulltime equivalent employees, and requested funding for the statewide interlibrary delivery service. Public library grant-in-aid (GIA) was level-funded at 24.2% of local appropriations and expenditures, not the full 25% per RI General Law § [29-6-2](#).

ii. Brown University: Providence High School Libraries Project

A Brown University project with Providence high school libraries will provide \$500,000 annually for collection development, equipment purchases and professional development. Ms. Mellor was invited to join the advisory board for this project and will contribute information about OLIS' support of school libraries statewide while exploring opportunities to strengthen that support in partnership with Brown.

To support the project, OLIS will certify three eligible Providence high school libraries for the Library of RI (LORI) ILL delivery service, enabling them to participate this spring. Certification will be open to other interested Providence high school libraries during the regular certification window in September. Brown University currently provides high school students access to their university libraries.

iii. Comparable Statistics

The 2023 Public Library Annual Survey [comparative statistics reports](#) have been published. The information informs OLIS services and RI public libraries.

iv. Grants (Ms. Baffoni)

a. Library of RI Project and Mini-Grants

Ms. Baffoni extended her gratitude to Board members who reviewed grant applications during the recent grant program. OLIS awarded 13 LORI grants: 7 [project](#) grants totaling \$143,275 and 6 [mini](#)-grants totaling \$34,020. Announcements will be made when grant documentation is finalized.

b. Professional Field Experience Grants

More professional field experience (PFE) grants will be offered to students and libraries for the May-August semester, with the application opening this week. PFE grants give URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS) students interested in working in public libraries the opportunity to be paid while completing a required library internship; libraries apply to host PFE students. Library applications to host PFE students during the last PFE grant round will be applied to this round. Awards will be announced in March.

c. Summer Reading Program Grants

The Summer Reading Program (SRP) [formula grant program](#) is open. Public libraries may apply for \$600 for youth programs, with an additional \$300 for each branch in a system, and \$300 for their adult program. The grant application and report have been simplified to ensure outcomes are easily measured; Take and Make kits have been disallowed going forward because they lack measurable outcomes. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) federal funding rules require outcomes to be measurable and meet program goals. OLIS will offer 'open office hours' to assist with questions and applications.

v. Digital Public Library of America (Mr. Morales Henry)

Mr. Pablo Morales Henry, OLIS' Network Services Manager, oversees network services, Talking Books Library (TBL), disaster preparedness, and digital projects, including the proposed RI hub of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA).

The RI DPLA hub project is progressing; challenges are being addressed and resolved with various stakeholders. Brown University will provide the project's technology infrastructure, and Mr. Morales Henry is working with Brown to resolve technical issues. Partner agreements are being defined to quantify duties and responsibilities for contributing institutions. OLIS is highlighting specific collections for the initial 50,000 item requirement.

While the initial digitized material focus is on Rhode Island materials, it has been expanded to include significant collections at RI institutions. A wide range of RI materials is being sought. For the upcoming second phase of the project, OLIS will explore how to assist smaller institutions with digitization projects. Grants from OLIS and other organizations may be available to assist with these projects.

Mr. Tran inquired about library material digitization guidance; the project will be providing such guidance to libraries through the project support website. Ms. David advocated that the project's third phase capture societal and cultural preservation from a modern digital perspective.

The project is moving ahead, and more information will be forthcoming. Ms. Mellor advised that the next milestone will be the submittal of the application to join the DPLA, which is expected to be completed by the end of June.

B. Year-in-Review, State Program Report Data

Ms. Mellor detailed expenditures for year two of OLIS' 2022 LSTA grant from September 2021 to September 2023. The information was reported in January through the annual state program report to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

LSTA funds expended for this period were \$1.2M, \$11,000 more than the prior year, and state funds were \$1.8M. Other expenditures in FY23 included grant-in-aid at \$9,827,339, Statewide Reference Resource Center (SRRC) at \$1,101,101, institutional libraries at \$62,609, and construction reimbursement at \$1,859,673.

For FY23, LORI was the highest single resource expenditure at \$999,516, Talking Books Library (TBL) was \$519,989, Library Development was \$380,827, Administration was \$345,229, LORI grants were \$250,460, and Reading Programs were \$206,840. Other spending included Data & Research at \$126,369, Continuing Education at \$87,613, Digitization & Preservation at \$85,751, and AskRI at \$23,903.

Total program costs were \$1,582,722 for personnel, \$744,250 for LORI ILL delivery, \$250,460 for sub-grants, \$203,906 for TBL, \$152,546 for Library Development, and \$92,613 for Administration. Staff time utilized was 23% on Library Development, 20% on TBL, 16.1% on LORI, 11.2% on Administration, 7.6% on Reading Programs, 7.1% Data & Research, 5.4% on Digitization, 4.7% on non-LSTA, and 1.5% on AskRI.

Ms. Baffoni and Mr. Morales Henry provided detailed information and statistics about specific programs and projects within their teams including LORI, professional development, grants, Kids Reading Across RI (KRARI) and other reading programs, data collection, network resources, and diversity, equity and inclusion projects.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Federal & State Legislative Updates (Ms. Space, Ms. Mellor)

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

i. Rhode Island Legislation

1. RI House [H7335](#): Requires public library grant-in-aid (GIA) to be funded at 25% of municipal appropriations and expenditures beginning in fiscal year 2025.
2. RI House [H7386](#): Provides for the protection of public libraries, and disallows attempts to censor/remove library materials deemed offensive.
3. RI House [H7575](#): Provides protections and defense from prosecution of librarians and educators for materials deemed obscene or objectionable.
4. RI House [H7508](#): Updates RI General Law § [6-13](#), 'Unfair Sales Practices', to include Section 6-13-22 that specifies eBook sale requirements between libraries and publishers.
5. RI House [H7475](#): Modernizes library statutes for the State Library by eliminating the clearinghouse advisory committee, updating clearinghouse publication lists distribution, reducing physical copies, and initiates digital publication. OLIS was assured the library community will continue to have input into material distribution and publications distributed by the State Library.

ii. Federal Legislation

No federal legislation discussed.

VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

No board member reports.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Public Library Minimum Standards

The committee will meet soon to review data.

B. Resource Sharing and School Libraries Committee

No new information.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. State Legislation (Ms. Mellor)

- i. State Aid to Libraries ([H7335](#))

The state's FY25 level funding of grant-in-aid (GIA) will result in 24 public libraries receiving less funding than in FY24. Libraries whose municipalities provided a 4% or more funding increase in FY23 will receive level or increased funding. At 25% funding, six municipalities will still receive less GIA than in FY24 due to decreased library expenditures. To fund FY25 GIA at 25% would require a \$350,000 increase in the GIA appropriation; including state institutions and contractual increases for the SRRC hosted at Providence Public Library would require a \$380,000 increase. OLIS uses the statutory formula in RIGL 29-6-2 for dispersion of state funds.

H7335 requires the state's FY25 public library be provided at 25% of the FY23 municipal appropriation and expenditure, with funding provided from RI general revenue or ARPA funds. There is no current Senate companion bill for H7335. Ms. Space requested the board support H7335 and will provide advocacy materials created by the RI Library Association (RILA). Ms. Space recommended members contact their representatives to indicate support. RILA is coordinating individuals to speak at the bill's hearing. Ms. Space and Mr. Coutu will communicate with the board to create a letter of support.

ii. Freedom to Read ([H7386](#))

H7386 defends the freedom to read and protects the freedom of public libraries to acquire materials without limitations and prohibits materials being removed from public libraries. OLIS reviewed this right-to-read legislation and provided feedback on its location in state statute. The legislation is not tied to state aid or any regulations that would have a negative effect on public libraries should local decisions result in the removal of library materials

Ms. Space will serve as the LBRI Legislative Committee Co-Chair going forward. Movement on these bills will be communicated to the board at the March meeting.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2024, 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. Bucci

Seconded By: Ms. David

The meeting adjourned at 5: 42 p.m.