

**LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**The Library Board of Rhode Island meeting was held**  
**April 08, 2024**  
**at William Hall Library**  
**Program Room, Lower Level**  
**1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905**

**Members Attending:** John Bucci, Aaron Coutu, Jessica David, Melody Drnach (Chair), Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Doug Norris, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Tien Tran, Kate Wodehouse

**Members Absent:** Kenneth Findlay, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Leslie Page, Karisa Tashjian

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

**Guests:** None

**Materials Distributed:**

- Legislative Report, April 2024

**I. WELCOME**

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:16 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** from the March 18, 2024, meeting

**Moved By:** Mr. Bucci

**Seconded By:** Mr. Coutu

The minutes were approved as presented.

**III. REPORT OF THE VICE CHAIR**

Ms. Drnach welcomed members.

**IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT**

**A. Community Libraries of Providence Grant**

Ms. Mellor attended a ceremony today at the Knight Memorial Library celebrating a \$100,000 congressionally directed earmark received by the Community Libraries of Providence through Senator Reed to upgrade their youth services collection. Ms. Space provided a summary of the event and encouraged libraries to apply for the grants.

April 7-13 is National Library Week; each day advocates a library priority. Today is 'Freedom to Read Day'.

**B. OLIS Updates**

**i. Biannual Delivery Count**

The Library of RI (LORI) biannual delivery count survey was conducted March 31-April 6. The survey gathers data about materials moving through the delivery system. Approximately 1.7 million items are processed annually through delivery. The spring count is generally higher than the fall count because of student activity.

## ii. Grants

### 1. Professional Field Experience

Professional Field Experience (PFE) grants were awarded to 8 URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS) students for public library internships from May-August.

### 2. Summer Reading Program

Summer Reading Program (SRP) grants were awarded to 43 public libraries to support youth and adult reading programs.

## iii. OLIS Partnerships

### 1. Mental Health Association of Rhode Island

Ms. Baffoni surveys library directors to establish quarterly library director forum topics. A recent survey indicated libraries are interested in community partnerships to provide social services and learn techniques to appropriately respond to patron behaviors. OLIS has provided past grants to libraries for social workers and services.

Terrence Charles, Director of Community Engagement and Operations for the [Mental Health Association of RI](#), spoke at the recent directors' forum about library social service programs. Mr. Charles was given public library contact information.

Ms. Space reported the Community Libraries of Providence used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for a community support specialist to assist the public and help staff deal with challenging situations. An ARPA-funded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is used by some libraries to help staff manage stressful work environments. West Warwick Public Library partners with multiple organizations to assist patrons with public assistance applications. Some libraries serve summer meals and offer food exchange programs.

Ms. Mellor noted reports of library workers who are traumatized from repeated interactions with difficult or challenging patron behavior; Ms. Space reported staff are experiencing compassion fatigue. Mr. Coutu reported Warwick Public Library provides guidelines to govern difficult situations. Ms. Kohl reported Bryant University counselors train library staff to assist students in crisis and campus security assists with adverse situations. Ms. Drnach recommended development of a standardized library procedure to handle problematic situations. OLIS will investigate library training programs for customer service and conflict management.

### 2. RI Department of Environmental Management

Ms. Mellor met with the Governor's Office to discuss how libraries can participate in the Governor's Office and Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) ['Litter-Free](#)

[Rhode Island](#)' initiative. First Lady Susan McKee is serving as an ambassador for this campaign. The campaign will be promoted at the May 4 Kids Reading Across RI (KRARI) event.

OLIS currently partners with the DEM to provide wildlife curriculum 'Rhody Critter Kits' and other training to public libraries. Kits contain program tools, activity supplies, and materials specific to RI wildlife and conservation.

### 3. Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library

First Lady McKee is interested in bringing Dolly Parton's [Imagination Library](#) program to Rhode Island. The program mails free books to children each month from birth to age 5. The Foundation manages the database, pays administrative costs, facilitates bulk purchases, and organizes relationships between a publisher (Penguin Random House) and participating organizations. Libraries and organizations enroll children and pay for books at an annual cost of \$26.20 per child. Delaware adopted the program statewide and children are enrolled at birth by hospitals.

Ms. Mellor met with First Lady McKee to discuss how Rhode Island could implement the program. First-year costs for a statewide program are estimated at \$100,000-\$150,000 and would increase annually; the program would particularly benefit children in the urban core who are economically disadvantaged. Newport's Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center and Cranston's Comprehensive Community Action Program are current participants. OLIS would commit to ensuring the program is aligned with libraries and to administer the partnerships. The Governor's Office will investigate possibilities for funding the program, as OLIS cannot support the program out of existing funds. Ms. Mellor also suggested that a more limited pilot could be conducted at a lesser amount.

Ms. David recommended RI hospitals automatically enroll babies as a contribution to libraries. Mr. Coutu noted privacy concerns may preclude automatic enrollment.

### 4. Kids' Reading Across RI

The annual 2024 Kids Reading Across RI ([KRARI](#)) event will be held at the RI State House on May 4 from 2-4pm and showcase the 2024 book choice, *The Lost Library*. Authors Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead will be on hand to sign books. Library organizations will provide activities.

## V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Federal & State Legislative Updates

Federal and State library legislation is on the [OLIS legislation webpage](#).

#### i. Rhode Island Legislation (Mr. Coutu)

As the legislative session winds down, some bills have been held for further study and others are scheduled for Education Committee hearings on April 10-11.

- S2281 encourages and protects the freedom of public libraries to acquire materials without limitations and prohibits materials being removed from public libraries due to partisan or doctrinal disapproval. The bill will be heard April 10.
- S2514 provides for the legal governance of licensed electronic literacy materials. The bill will be heard April 10.
- S2520 requires every public school in Rhode Island to have a school library or library media center in a permanent and dedicated space available to students in grades K-12 with a librarian available. The bill will be heard April 10.
- S2742 modernizes all state library laws by eliminating the clearinghouse advisory committee, updating how the clearinghouse publishes its list of publications, reducing the number of physical copies and facilitating digital publication. The bill will be heard April 10.
- H8098 establishes a Rhode Island creative futures fund of \$18,000,000. Providence Public Library would receive \$2,500, 000 to support the arts. The bill will be heard April 11.

Ms. Mellor will provide a [Capitol TV](#) link to view hearings. Ms. Space reported RI Library Legislative Day is April 11 from 2-4 pm at the State House; a press conference is scheduled for 3pm.

Ed Garcia, Director, Cranston Public Library, provided information on legal governance of licensed electronic literacy materials to the LBRI last month to help develop a support letter for H7508 and S2514; Ms Drnach submitted letters of support for these bills. Ms. Kohl helped develop a letter of support for H7575 and S2429 that provide defense for school, museum, or library employees for circulating obscene publications or shows and selling or exhibiting obscene publications to minors; Ms. Drnach will submit these letters of support when hearings are scheduled. A Letter of support was previously submitted for H7386 (Freedom to Read).

#### ii. Federal Legislation

Federal legislation was not discussed.

### **VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS**

No board member reports.

### **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### A. Public Library Minimum Standards

The committee has not met.

#### B. Resource Sharing and School Libraries Committee

The committee has not met. Ms. Steever reported the RI Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK) posted [Member Services Librarian and Coordinator positions](#).

#### C. Library Funding Sources

A discussion of alternative sources of funding and partnerships for library initiatives was introduced at the March meeting and continued to this meeting. Ms. Mellor opened the discussion by requesting member input for new library funding sources. Ms. David recommended a statewide bond for equity-based library infrastructure, maintenance, and other capital projects. Ms. Mellor noted that public libraries are eligible for state-funded reimbursement of construction or renovation, but ongoing maintenance or capital improvements such as roof replacement, storm damage repairs, HVAC upgrades, or energy-efficiency enhancements are not eligible as stand-alone projects. She further noted that some states have used ARPA funds for library repairs. Ms. Space reported on the Community Library's efforts to repair aging buildings, and Mr. Tran discussed Exeter Public Library's recent repairs, all of which were undertaken without state support. Ms. Mellor stated that many of the state's libraries are over 50 years old, with some that are considerably older, and many need modernization and/or infrastructure improvements.

OLIS will investigate conducting a library infrastructure survey to determine current needs; no such survey has been undertaken since the late 1990's. Ms. Mellor noted the costs and benefits of conducting a statewide library facilities assessment, which a few states have undertaken recently. Ms. David suggested the possibility of pursuing funding for such a study from foundations interested in libraries or infrastructure projects. The study would help identify the amount needed to repair and update public libraries statewide.

Discussion continued to funding for eBooks, digital literacy initiatives, and online digital resources; libraries may be eligible for funding support for such programs through the federal [Digital Equity Act](#), and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment ([BEAD](#)) Program through [ConnectRI](#), a program of the RI Commerce Corporation.

Ms. Space further recommended library adult education services be developed through partnerships with educational institutions, and Mr. Norris suggested adult certificate-based training programs in partnership with the RI Department of Education (RIDE).

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

## **X. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for May 20, 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 5:41 p.m.