

**LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held**  
**November 25, 2024**  
**at William Hall Library**  
**Program Room, Lower Level**  
**1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905**

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

**Members Absent:** John Bucci, Kenneth Findlay, Doug Norris, Monica Nazareth-Dzialo

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

**Guests:** None

**Materials Distributed:**

- Proposed FY26 Grant-in-Aid
- Public Library Standards Draft V1
- Public Library Standards Draft Crosswalk

**I. WELCOME**

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** from the October 28, 2024, meeting

Moved By: Ms. David

Seconded By: Mr. Coutu

The minutes were approved as presented.

**III. REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

Ms. Drnach welcomed members.

**IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT**

A. OLIS Updates

i. Federal funding for libraries in context of 2024 election

Ms. Mellor discussed potential issues facing libraries following the 2024 election, including challenges related to intellectual freedom and library programming. The former president's budget annually included a proposal to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which would substantially impact federal funding to libraries. These proposals were overcome with bipartisan support.

To support the reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA), the American Library Association (ALA) and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) are gathering

data that shows the countrywide impact of federal funding on state library agencies and libraries. Ms. Mellor noted there are many government entities functioning without authorization. Funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts has not been reauthorized in 30 years, but funding continues. The issue is that non-authorization of an agency makes it easier to eliminate that agency. The MLSA reauthorization work will continue, though introduction of legislation may be postponed until after the 2026 mid-term elections. The MLSA governs the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding provided to OLIS.

COSLA will host a library legislative day in Washington, DC, in March 2025; Ms. Mellor is the co-chair of the COSLA policy group planning the event. ALA will host a targeted congressional fly-in event in April 2025.

Ms. David inquired if there is information about libraries in Project 2025. Ms. Mellor noted cutting funding to libraries and their supporting agency is mentioned in Project 2025.

#### ii. Grant-in-Aid FY26

The board reviewed proposed FY26 level funded grant-in-aid (GIA) to libraries and GIA funded at 25%. The two proposals were submitted to the budget office and House Fiscal. The difference between level funding and 25% funding is \$214,000. Construction reimbursement will be less in FY26 due to contractual agreements so the adjusted increase to fully fund State Aid to Libraries in FY26 would be \$133,000.

Quite a few municipalities will receive less state aid if it is level funded because of funding increases in other municipalities. Libraries that did not receive a municipal budget increase of approximately 4% will receive less state aid in FY26. If GIA is funded at 25%, some municipalities may still receive less state aid because all appropriated funds in that municipality were not spent. Some state aid decreases reflect endowment losses. If GIA is level funded, the percentage will be 24.5%. The governor will release the FY26 budget in January.

#### iii. Digital Public Library of America

The Digital Public Library of American (DPLA) is experiencing organizational growing pains due to the success of DPLA and the expansion of its eBook projects. DPLA is now shifting its attention to eBook projects as it does not have the resources or capacity to support both projects adequately. A search began this year for another organization with the capacity to take over and manage DPLA and serve as the aggregator of digital content from states. A new organization has allegedly been located but no information has been provided about the transition.

Some states are leaving DPLA due to the uncertainty and diminished capacity at DPLA to support the project and are focused on supporting their own digital libraries; contributed DPLA collections will remain available, but no content is being added. OLIS, Providence Public Library, and Brown University have decided to not join DPLA at the present time until these issues are resolved and will shift the focus to creating a RI digital library that may be integrated with DPLA at a later date. The project will continue as planned, with Phase 1

focusing on existing digital collections hosted by academic and other libraries and Phase 2 focused on assisting smaller institutions with digitization efforts. OLIS and its partners are currently working to identify an aggregation tool for hosting, with OLIS underwriting hosting costs.

Ms. Kohl inquired about future project meetings. Ms. Mellor advised the partners will meet in January to decide on options being prepared by OLIS. Once a decision is made, a general meeting will be held to share project plans with the community.

iv. Community Libraries of Providence

Ms. Space shared information about a recent threat about funding for the Community Libraries of Providence (CPL) due to the ongoing lawsuit involving state funding of the Providence Public Schools. CPL, a 501(c)3 library providing services to the City of Providence, receives funding through a city budget grant line and the funding is considered discretionary spending. A decision is expected on the lawsuit is expected this week.

v. Central Falls Public Library

Ms. Mellor, Ms. Space, Ed Garcia, Director, Cranston Public Library, and Susan Reed, Director, Pawtucket Public Library, met last week with State Treasurer James Diossa, Chair of the Central Falls Public Library (CPL) Board of Trustees, to discuss establishing a new path forward for the library, including assistance with strategic planning. Ms. Mellor extended her thanks to Ms. Space, Mr. Garcia, and Ms. Reed for their support. The library has hired a new director who will start at the library in the new year.

vi. AskRI Databases, Tutor.com

The RI Department of Education (RIDE) removed Tutor.com from their website's recommended list of tutor services this year due to its recent acquisition by a foreign company. Ms. Mellor stated that the service does not receive much use on the AskRI platform, and that OLIS negotiated a 50% reduction in the FY25 contract and will continue to monitor product use.

Ms. Drnach inquired if similar applications are available. Ms. Mellor noted that there may be alternative products. Dr. Lynch will provide Ms. Mellor with a contact at RIDE to learn more about products the agency recommends. Mr. Coutu inquired if RIDE published a statement about the removal. Dr. Lynch noted that RIDE may have sent out an advisement and will investigate. Mr. Coutu's concern is the financial impact on OLIS when the purchase of a vendor product has been removed from a recommended list by another state agency.

vii. Annual State Program Report

Ms. Mellor and Ms. Baffoni are working on the annual State Program Report due to the Institute of Museum and Library Services at the end of January. Report information will be shared at the February meeting.

## V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Federal & State Legislative Updates (OLIS website [updates](#))

Federal and state legislation was not discussed.

## **VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS**

No board member reports.

## **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **A. Public Library Minimum Standards: Updates (Ms. Mellor)**

Proposed changes to the public library minimum standards were reviewed and discussed. The standards have been reorganized into topical sections and updated to include defined citations to specific laws for library compliance.

It has been recommended that Trustee requirements be added to include annual orientation, specific duties, and training requirements. Ms. Drnach requested information about enforcement of any trustee training requirement. Ms. Mellor advised that enforcement would be managed by OLIS through library certification of standards compliance; OLIS will not monitor training of trustees on an individual basis.

Mr. La Roux inquired about providing framework in the standards for GIA distribution in communities with multiple independent libraries. Ms. Mellor advised that state law requires such communities to have a library council to coordinate library services; OLIS does not make the determination on how GIA is distributed in those municipalities as by law, those decisions are made at the municipal level.

The section on library policies was revised to be more specific in terms of the policies libraries should have, and an intellectual freedom statement was recommended for inclusion. The standards committee will meet again before the December LBRI meeting. The committee goal is to attain board approval in January for the revised standards and then proceed with public forums for community feedback.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Library Futures**

Item not discussed.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

## **X. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2024, from 4-5:30pm, at William Hall Library, 1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905. Members will be notified of date or venue changes.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved By: Mr. Tien

Seconded By: Mr. La Roux

The meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.