

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held
December 16, 2024
at William Hall Library
Program Room, Lower Level
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

Members Attending: John Bucci, Melody Drnach (Chair), Christopher La Roux, Doug Norris, Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: Aaron Coutu, Jessica David, Kenneth Findlay, Laura Kohl, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Tien Tran

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed: Public-Library-Standards-draft-V2-LBRI

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the November 25, 2024, meeting

Moved By: Ms. Page

Seconded By: Ms. Wodehouse

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Ms. Drnach welcomed members and expressed her gratitude to committee members for their work on the public library standards revision.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. Year End Reporting

Ms. Mellor and Ms. Baffoni are working on year-end reports for Enterprise Technology Strategy & Services (ETSS), OLIS' parent agency, due December 20, and the annual state report, due January 31 to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

ii. Youth Services

Danielle Margarida, Youth Services Coordinator, is working with the RI PBS Foundation and The Public's Radio on a literacy program focused on pre-k and kindergarten students in Providence, Pawtucket, Cranston, and Central Falls. The program will expand statewide next year to offer family learning kits and PBS kid show-based curriculum for families and children aged 6-8, professional development, and a summer event for pre-k and kindergarten students and families. More information is forthcoming.

OLIS works annually with the RI Center for the Book (RICFB) to procure and distribute book sets to schools for the RI Children’s Book Award (RICBA). The book sets consist of books selected by a committee of public and school librarians for students in grades 3 to 5. Children will vote on their favorite book in March and April. The winning author receives the annual RI Children’s Book Award and attends an OLIS-sponsored event to meet children and sign books. The annual cost for the program is approximately \$20,000.

Annual Summer Reading Program (SRP) planning is in process, and program manuals have been purchased and made available to libraries. The program is open to all ages, with programs for children, teens, and adults. OLIS provides the theme and program materials to libraries who determine program specifics for their libraries. The 2025 program theme is ‘Level Up at Your Library’. Ms. Margarida visited a number of libraries last year to view the impact of SRP funding and to inform SRP planning for this year.

iii. 2025 Reading Across RI Book

RICFB will announce the 2025 Reading Across RI book this week. The kickoff event is February 1, and the author event is April 27. Ms. Mellor will provide an event update to the board.

iv. Ms. Space

Ms. Space was showcased in the Providence Journal article *Five Questions with Cheryl Space* and was a guest on the ‘Overdueing It’ podcast. The podcast, partially sponsored by OLIS, is a collaboration between Rhody Radio, Cranston Public Library, and OLIS. The episode is available online. Emily Goodman, Adult Services Coordinator and Dave Bartos, Coordinator of Adult Services, Cranston Public Library, contribute significantly to the podcast. Ms. Space received the Page Turner award earlier this year.

v. LBRI Chair

Ms. Drnach announced that she would be stepping down as chair of the board due to other commitments, though will continue to participate in meetings as time allows until her position is filled. Ms. Drnach has been on the LBRI since 2015 and served as the chair since 2018. Vice-chair Aaron Coutu will lead meetings until a new chair is appointed. The LBRI Chair is appointed by the Governor.

Ms. Drnach thanked board members for their service and commitment to the board, and commended members for their engagement and the great work she anticipates will be accomplished in the future with the board’s outstanding roster.

Ms. Mellor and board members extended their gratitude to Ms. Drnach for her many years of leadership.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

A. State Legislation

The General Assembly will adjourn in January. Ms. Space, who serves as co-chair of the RI Library Association’s Legislative Action Committee shared that RILA is working with

Representatives Morales, Stewart, and McKenney on a bill to add a 'Freedom To Read' provision to RI General Law 29-6. The section will define freedom to read and provide guidance on collection development policies and to boards of trustees. The bill will also provide protections for authors, publishers, and entities involved in book production and distribution. The RI Authors Against Book Bans group is also active in the effort. The bill is modeled on New Jersey's 'Freedom to Read' law. The NJ bill gives the state librarian the responsibility to ensure libraries have collection policies.

EBook legislation, which has been introduced in several past sessions, will not be introduced this year.

B. Federal Legislation

The Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) expires in September 2025. The American Library Association (ALA) has suggested delaying reauthorization advocacy in the current political climate. The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) will host 'Voices for Libraries' in March in Washington with the objective of raising awareness about the importance of federal funding for libraries, especially state library agencies as provided for in MLSA. Library advocates from across the country will be invited to attend the 'Voices for Libraries' event. COSLA partnered with ALA on this event last year, but due to scheduling conflicts, ALA will not be participating this year. ALA will hold a separate, more focused event in April.

Ms. Mellor is the co-chair of the COSLA Public Policy Committee that is coordinating Voices for Library. She also is COSLA's liaison to ALA's Committee on Legislation, which establishes ALA's legislative agenda, and sits on ALA's MLSA Reauthorization Committee.

Senator Jack Reed is working on adding libraries back in as eligible partners for the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); libraries were removed in the last reauthorization of WIOA.

VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

A. Ms. Steever

'Project Look Sharp', sponsored by OLIS and RILA, trained approximately 30 school librarians through Ithaca College. As a participant, Ms. Steever found the training valuable. The last project session discussed ways to make the project available to other school librarians.

The project discussed reviewing media and teaching secondary and primary level students to explore the authorship, intent, and purpose of media. Ms. Mellor noted that OLIS and the URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS) co-sponsored the project sessions. Wendy Gustavel, School Librarian, Rocky Hill Country Day School, was the local facilitator for the project.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

Ms. Mellor reviewed changes and edits made by the committee since the last meeting.

In the Governance section, director evaluation by the trustees was changed from annually to every 2 years; this change was requested by library directors. Some libraries do not specify the term length of trustees; state law requires a 3-year term for public boards, but not all boards follow that requirement. Trustee training was included to require 6 hours of training, which would amount to 2 hours for each term year, which was the recommended change. The library council requirement was separated into two items: one for division of state aid and one for planning services for the community. In the Policies section, the board discussed at the last meeting that stronger communications are necessary to advise libraries about policies they should establish. Instead of fusing intellectual freedom with inclusivity, equitability, and accessibility, intellectual freedom was made a separate policy. Ms. Space specifically expressed that library services be defined in the standards as inclusive. The concept that services be defined in the standards as inclusive, equitable, and accessible, particularly to people with other abilities, will be presented to the library community for feedback. Feedback from the board on this topic is welcomed.

In the Facilities section, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act compliance requirement was made a separate item. The bulk of waiver requests on following applicable laws are from libraries out of compliance with ADA requirements because of structural limitations. Funding was separated between maintenance of facility and grounds, and a capital improvement plan reviewed on a defined schedule and provided to the municipality for inclusion in the municipality's comprehensive plan as required by RI general law.

For Staffing, technology support and cybersecurity requirements were added specifying a staff member or equivalent town or contract services to support library technologies. In some libraries, OSL or the municipality provides support. Clarity will be provided on the distinction between digital services to patrons and technology support. Requirements for reference services staff was changed to adult services. Youth services was updated to define services to include children and teens.

Also, under Staffing, initial job orientation and ongoing training were added as requirements. Paraprofessional staff must be trained on relevant systems and services and have regular job training. Professional staff must complete a specific number of hours of continuing education or professional development, with a broad definition of what fulfills this requirement. Requirements of part-time professional staff were made proportional to their regular workhours. Libraries will continue to be required to always have 2 staff members scheduled for work as a safety measure. The weekly open hour requirement was adjusted to revise hours for municipalities of 40,000 or more to 60 hours and increase independent library hours in communities under 10,000 to 35 hours.

Under Services, clarity was provided on access to materials, with special provisions for digital subscriptions. ADA accessibility was clarified to provide assistive technologies alternative access or staff assistance as needed and to highlight compliance with ADA requirements for access to websites and electronic content. Access to computers was updated to include access to printers. Feedback from libraries will be gathered before a board vote in February.

Ms. Mellor will share the schedule of meetings with the board. Updates from these meetings will be provided at the next meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2025, 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. Bucci

Seconded By: Ms. Tashjian

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.