

**LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held on**  
**May 19, 2025**  
**at William Hall Library**  
**Lower-level Program Room**  
**1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905**

**Members Attending:** John Bucci, Jessica David, Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Doug Norris, Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Kate Wodehouse

**Members Absent:** Aaron Coutu (Vice Chair), Melody Drnach (Chair), Kenneth Findlay, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Karisa Tashjian, Tien Tran

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

**Guests:** None

**Materials Distributed:** LBRI Legislation Committee Report May 2025

**I. WELCOME**

Ms. Kohl served as the Pro Tem Chair and called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** from the April 28, 2025, meeting

Moved By: Ms. Space

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

The minutes were approved as presented.

**III. REPORT OF THE PRO TEM-CHAIR**

Ms. Kohl welcomed members. Ms. Mellor and the Board expressed their gratitude to Ms. Kohl for serving as Pro Tem Chair.

**IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT**

**A. OLIS Updates**

**i. Budget**

On July 1, the state will transition to an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that will encompass all budgetary, procurement and personnel processes.

OLIS' FY26 budget is anticipated to be funded at the current service level and include contractual staff pay increases.

**ii. Digital Library of Rhode Island (DLORI)**

The future of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) is unclear at present; while the organization continues to operate, its future management is undetermined. OLIS will move ahead with DLORI with Brown University hosting the project on the Omeka platform. Pablo Morales Henry, OLIS' Network Services Manager, established a working DLORI instance using

content from Brown University Library. After some system issues are resolved, OLIS will reach out to previously identified libraries with existing digital collections who are interested in participating in DLORI. The goal is to build DLORI in time for RI250 as a free-standing digital collection that would be configured for DPLA integration in the future, should that be a viable option. The library community will be updated on project developments this summer.

Mr. La Roux inquired if the project is digitizing or pointing to content. Ms. Mellor advised that the first phase will aggregate and point to existing collections via an RI portal. The second phase may provide digitization assistance to libraries and other cultural institutions with significant collections through arrangements with DLORI partners. OLIS has identified various collections that have yet to be digitized or are digitized but may not have complete metatag.

### iii. Public Library Annual Survey (PLAS) & Library of RI (LORI) Certification

The annual public library survey and LORI certification process will run concurrently and proceed as last year. Some PLAS data is passed through to the national survey conducted by the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

### iv. Kid Reading Across RI (KRARI), Summer Reading Program (SRP)

The Summer Reading Program will kick-off at the annual KRARI event on June 14 from 2-4pm at the William Hall Library. This year's SRP theme is 'Level Up at Your Library'. Ms. Mellor acknowledged Ms. Space's leadership in creating the KRARI program 16 years ago.

This year's program will focus on RI author and illustrator Oge Mora, a RI School of Design graduate, and 3 of her books, *Thank You, Omu!*, *Saturday*, and *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read*. Ms. Mora will speak at the event and sign books and meet attendees. Ms. Mora is also an artist for the national iReads summer program which OLIS participates in.

Organizations such as the RI Food Bank and Girls on the Run, and 14 public libraries, will provide activity tables and outdoor games. RI PBS will promote summer reading by airing announcements featuring Ms. Mora and the winners of the student reader contest.

## B. Status and Impact of Executive Order on Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

On May 13, RI Judge John McConnell granted a preliminary injunction on the attorneys general case co-led by RI Attorney General Peter F. Neronha to overturn the Executive Order. The American Library Association (ALA) also initiated a lawsuit, and a temporary restraining order was issued on that case on May 2. The preliminary injunction has more permanence because it halts the Executive Order until the court issues a final ruling and is not time-bound. The ALA's temporary restraining order lasts only 14 days, but did stop the termination of IMLS staff who were on paid administrative leave.

The preliminary injunction halts execution of the policies, directives, and actions prescribed in the Executive Order; it specifically orders that no further actions to eliminate the IMLS can be taken and that IMLS employees and contractors should be restored to their pre-March 14 status. The preliminary injunction also orders the IMLS to not pause, cancel, or fail to disburse

funds, and that the IMLS should release funds that were made inaccessible due to the Executive Order.

Both Providence Public Library (\$50,000) and Brown University Library (\$175,000) had grants terminated as a result of the Executive Order. The court ruling may result in those grant terminations being reversed. Grants to States awards have been restored to California, Connecticut, and Washington and those states were advised that they would receive their 2025 awards. The preliminary injunction ordered the IMLS to file a status report in 7 days outlining compliance with the court's order.

Ms. Mellor learned today, at the national Library Statistics Working Group (LSWG) meeting, that IMLS staff are being recalled to work in phases. LSWG, an IMLS convened working group which consists of a small group of state library chief officers and state data coordinators including Ms. Mellor and OLIS State Data Coordinator Kelly Metzger, is working to develop a way to move forward with national library data collection in the absence of IMLS. The group, which has continued to meet on its own, has reached out to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) to ask for support to help fill the void left by the IMLS. LSWG will continue meeting because of the continuing threat of elimination of the IMLS.

OLIS received notice of a partial award of its 2025 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) allotment on April 23. OLIS also had an overdue drawdown request on its 2024 LSTA award filled on April 29. On May 7, OLIS was notified that a supplemental award for the balance of its 2025 grant should be issued by the end of May when funds are released from the federal Office of Management and Budget. The supplemental award will bring OLIS LSTA funding to slightly over \$1.4 million, the same amount as received in 2024; the funds will be spent in State FY26.

Ms. Mellor had previously notified the board on May 9 about the proposed elimination of IMLS in the 2026 budget framework developed by the President. Should this provision come into effect, it should not impact receipt of the 2025 grant award.

## **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS (Ms. Space)**

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

### **A. State Legislation**

- **The Freedom to Read Act (S-0238)**

The Senate passed S-0238 Sub A, which included some revision to the policy statements. There is concern that the House potentially has issues with the Private Right of Action section. A meeting is scheduled with the House Speaker who has previously expressed interest in moving the bill to a vote. The Freedom to Read Coalition will meet to discuss strategy. If changes are made, the bill will return to the Senate for another vote.

Ms. Mellor congratulated Ms. Space, Mr. Coutu, and Mr. Garcia, Director, Cranston Public Library, for their work on The Freedom to Read Act. It was noted by Mr. Coutu that Penguin Random House, which has been providing support on Freedom to Read bills nationwide, is

actively supporting RI's bill and is of the opinion that the RI bill could become a national model.

- Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Funding (H5400)

As Ms. Mellor previously noted, GIA is level funded in the Governor's Budget. Mr. Coutu and Ms. Space testified before the House Finance Committee that libraries should receive the full 25% funding because many libraries would lose funding under the Governor's Budget. Ms. Mellor noted that achieving full funding may be a challenge this year due to the projected state deficits exacerbated by federal funding losses.

- School Libraries Act (H5488)

Ms. Steever reported that H5488 has been held for further study, and that schools universally are losing funding at the district level.

#### B. Federal Legislation

The federal government is operating under a continuing budget resolution for the 2025 fiscal year. Senator Jack Reed is circulating a bipartisan 'Dear Appropriator' letter in the Senate; a similar letter is circulating in the House. The letters request that Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds appropriated by Congress be used as originally intended, with a call out on the \$180 million allotted for the Grants to States program. As of Friday, the Senate letter has received 27 signatures, and the House letter has received 104.

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

Ms. Steever and Ms. Mellor reported that the RI Library Association's (RILA) annual conference is May 21-22 at the University of RI. There will be 2 days of programming and a day with a school library focus. Event registration is closed at this point.

### **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### A. Public Library Minimum Standards

There has been no movement on the new standard regulations, but activity will proceed in the upcoming weeks.

### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

#### A. Public Library Construction Reimbursement Standards

Shawn Brown, Town of Middletown Administrator, and Kimberly Usselman, Middletown Public Library Director, attended the June 17, 2024, meeting to discuss a proposed Middletown library construction project and to request that the state's library construction reimbursement regulations be reviewed as they were last revised in 2018, and costs have skyrocketed since then. In response to this request, the board communicated their intention to Mr. Brown and Ms. Usselman to review the Public Library Construction Reimbursement Regulations when the Public Library Standards review was complete. In May 2025, OLIS received a letter of intent for the Middletown library construction project.

Motion to form a review committee for the Public Library Construction Reimbursement Regulations

**Moved by:** Ms. David

**Seconded by:** Ms. Page

Motion was approved.

Ms. Space, Mr. Bucci, Mr. LaRoux, and Ms. Wodehouse volunteered to serve on the committee; meetings will begin this summer. Ms. Mellor and Kelly Metzger, OLIS Data Coordinator, will support the committee. Any other members interested in joining the committee should contact Ms. Mellor.

Mr. LaRoux inquired if new regulations must be approved by the General Assembly. Ms. Mellor advised that new regulations are promulgated through the Office of Regulatory Reform and developed by the governing agencies. The OLIS website provides links to all library regulations.

#### **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No comment

#### **X. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for June 16, 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: Mr. Norris

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.