

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
A regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held
November 17, 2025
at Providence Public Library, Mural Room, 3rd Floor
150 Empire Street, Providence, RI 02903

Members Attending: Aaron Coutu (Vice Chair), Melody Drnach (Chair), Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Karisa Tashjian, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: John Bucci, Jessica David, Kenneth Findlay, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Tien Tran

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed: None

I. WELCOME

Mr. Coutu called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the October 27, 2025, meeting

Moved By: Ms. Wodehouse

Seconded By: Ms. Steever

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. REPORT OF THE VICE CHAIR

Mr. Coutu welcomed members.

IV. CHIEF OF LIBRARY SERVICES REPORT

A. OLIS Updates

i. Grant-in-Aid

Grant-in-aid (GIA) applications are approved except for the Adams Public Library in Central Falls (CFA) application that includes requests for waivers of the Public Library Standards. OLIS is working with CFA in creating a strategy to work towards achieving standards compliance.

Adding new GIA contracts to the state's new financial system was challenging because the migration of GIA contracts from the old system was problematic, requiring reentry. Funds are anticipated for a mid to late December release to libraries.

ii. Enterprise Resource Program, Payroll Processing

The new financial system will manage HR payroll processes starting today. Staff will be alert for potential issues when entering data. Ms. Baffoni is a Change Ambassador for the Enterprise Resource Program (ERP), assisting OLIS and other agencies. OLIS staff have always

reported attendance time against federal report project categories, but now this process will be incorporated into the state's ERP, which will simplify federal reporting. Ms. Baffoni noted minor system issues are resolved, and multiple payroll processing plans are ready to counteract any potential significant issues.

iii. Digital Library of RI Presentation

Ms. Mellor and Mr. Pablo Morales Henry presented the Digital Library of RI (D-LORI) to libraries on November 4. Currently, content has been loaded into the portal from Brown University Library, Providence Public Library, and the State Archives. OLIS is now working with the University of RI, the RI School of Design, and Warren's George Hail Library to ingest their content; OLIS will continue to add content from other institutions that meets portal criteria. D-LORI is a content aggregator, and points to content that is maintained and hosted by holding libraries. Mr. Morales Henry will attend a future meeting to demonstrate the portal.

iv. Baker & Taylor, FirstSearch Service

Baker & Taylor (B&T), a national library book distributor and library service provider, announced they are ceasing operations at the end of 2025. Ocean State Libraries (OSL), who uses B&T as their cataloging tool for public libraries, formed a committee to determine a way forward and to mitigate service disruptions. OLIS is represented on the committee.

OLIS subscribes to FirstSearch from OCLC, but it is an interlibrary loan discovery tool, not a cataloging resource though at times libraries refer to FirstSearch cataloging records. Prior to the B&T announcement, OLIS's FirstSearch service was unavailable because the OLIS' user validation server went down. The outage was unrelated to the B&T announcement and Mr. Morales Henry investigated and repaired the problem. The update will require users of this OLIS service to sign up again. OLIS will update the terms of use to make it clear to users how the service may be used. OLIS manually processed interlibrary loan (ILL) requests during its FirstSearch validation outage.

OLIS also subscribes to WorldShare, another OCLC Service. OLIS is currently reviewing both FirstSearch and WorldShare for usage and to analyze cost effectiveness. Colleges have access to OCLC services, public libraries do not participate in OCLC and out of state lending is minimal, and school libraries have extremely minimal ILL.

v. Ocean State Media

Ocean State Media and RI Public Broadcast Service (RI PBS) hosted 'Be My Neighbor' day on November 15 at the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (MET) school in Providence. Danielle Margarida, Youth Services Coordinator, staffed a 'trolley stop' table and distributed project materials and books. The event served pre-school age children.

vi. Tech Access Assistive Technology Conference, November 20

Alicia Waters, Library Services Coordinator, Talking Books Library (TBL), will attend the Tech Access Assistive Technology Conference on Thursday to present information about TBL services and encourage program enrollment. Eligibility for TBL enrollment has expanded to include individuals with reading disabilities. A physician certification was formerly required

for program access, but certification of specific reading-related disabilities can now be submitted by a social worker or librarian. TBL has less than 1,000 patrons, a reduction from approximately 1,800 patrons in 2000.

The National Library Service (NLS), a part of the Library of Congress, funds and provides TBL program equipment and materials, and offers online resources through the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service. Although NLS provides higher quality audio recordings than other services, NLS patronage is decreasing nationwide because older citizens have more media options.

OLIS pays about \$225,000 annually to the Perkins School for the Blind, the organization that manages OLIS' TBL collection and machines while OLIS manages direct services to readers. Because most states pay for the NLS with federal funds, the NLS has reached out to states to better understand how the service will be funded if federal funding is cut. Ms. Mellor said that OLIS will not be able to provide the current level of service without federal funding but could potentially fund a limited form. Many libraries are doing duplication on demand because of space limitations, and Ms. Mellor has considered doing the work in-house rather than contracting with Perkins, but currently the Perkins contract is the more cost-efficient way of handling the service.

B. Federal Budget

i. Federal Funds

With the reopening of the federal government, OLIS will submit drawdowns for funds expended in the last 2.5 months. Ms. Mellor remains cautiously optimistic about the 2026 federal budget funding for libraries because of news from the House and Senate that the proposed funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is almost level with the 2025 budget. A good portion of the federal allocation to Rhode Island supports staff salaries.

ii. Institute of Museum and Library Services

The IMLS is planning an in-person January convening for state data coordinators, and another for Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in March or April. OLIS' IMLS program manager, Madison Bolls, is leaving for an NLS position. Only two IMLS staff members remain to service the Grants to States program.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

A. State Legislation

i. RI Library Association

Ms. Space reported the RI Library Association (RILA) continues to support eBook pricing legislation, full GIA funding at 25%, and School Library legislation for the 2026 legislative session. Ms. Space will attend a School Libraries of RI (SLRI) committee meeting on November 25.

B. Federal Legislation

Federal legislation was not discussed.

VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

No board member reports.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Library Trustees Manual

Ms. Baffoni reported the first 3 draft sections of the manual were circulated for feedback at the October meeting and the board will receive digital copies. Ms. Drnach noted at that meeting that draft feedback from non-library people would be very useful.

OLIS hosted a Zoom public library trustee training on November 6 for approximately 65 people. Entire trustee boards and interested parties attended the training that was mostly about the draft sections related to laws, rules, and responsibilities. Questions raised about the RI Open Meetings Act (OMA) indicate that another OMA training with the RI Attorney General's office would be beneficial. The recorded 2022 OMA meeting with the Attorney General was reviewed by Ms. Baffoni and determined to still be relevant.

A digital version of the training is being edited to include captions and members will be notified when it is available. OLIS also has other resources to which trustees can be directed. Most of the next draft should be issued to the board by December 10 for a meeting discussion with plans for full publication in the new year.

Ms. Mellor noted the trustee training resembles LBRI training because it informs about laws governing public libraries and discusses trustee and director responsibilities. The new Public Library Standards will require trustee training, propose trustee term limits, and recommend that boards reflect their communities. Some boards have long-term members with little board turnover. Some New England states have trustee associations, but RI does not have strong trustee support.

OLIS held a training session for public libraries on accessibility that was well-attended. Mr. Robert Martin, Digital Services Manager, Enterprise Technology Strategy & Services, provided the training. Ms. Baffoni will release the finalized video.

B. Library Construction Reimbursement Regulations

There is no movement on Library Construction Reimbursement Regulations, but a committee meeting will be scheduled soon. The Town of Middletown is moving forward with library construction; their construction reimbursement rates will be based on current regulations.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Library Support

Ms. Space had previously brought up the issue of the board potentially investigating ways to support school libraries specifically related to their Integrated Library System (ILS) catalog. Ms. Mellor requested board input on the topic.

Ms. Steever reported the Follett Library Catalog used by RI schools has frequent problems. The catalog is managed by the RI Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK) that is staffed by part-time retired librarians. School librarians are unsure how long RILINK will exist in its current state and are concerned because RILINK manages the school catalog. Ms. Steever's school district, East Greenwich (EG), is a RILINK member with resource access but EG uses a different catalog, the Access Library Management System, which was recently acquired by Follett; RILINK does not provide catalog support. Some school libraries also pay for SORA, an Overdrive digital reading platform for K-12 students that includes eBooks, audiobooks and magazines.

RILINK members receive discounts to other databases including CultureGrams and PebbleGo, and have access to LibGuides, a resource that resolves website accessibility issues. RILINK fees are based on the number of students; these fees may be paid out of the library or technology budget depending on the district. Ms. Mellor noted that RILINK's funding comes only from school membership fees.

Ms. Tashjian asked if Ocean State Libraries (OSL) could provide services to schools, and Ms. Mellor replied that OSL serves public libraries. Ms. Space reported that Mr. Stephen Spohn, OSL Executive Director, was asked if the Community Libraries of Providence (CLP) could add 37 Providence school libraries to CLP. Mr. Spohn noted it was possible but could cause system issues. The Providence schools use Follett but is not a member of RILINK. Mr. Coutu noted that adding school libraries to OSL could be a school catalog solution.

The board discussed various paths to support RILINK. Ms. Mellor noting that RILINK would have to play an active part in the process. Earlier discussions with RILINK on the issue have not resulted in any resolution to the challenges the network faces. Ms. Baffoni will research potential solutions in other states.

Ms. Mellor will meet with Ms. Steever, Ms. Space, and selected school librarians and libraries to discuss next steps. Ms. Space requested the school catalog review begin in January because of holiday season time constraints.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2025, 4-5:30pm, at a library to be determined. Members will be notified of date or venue changes.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By: Ms. Page

Seconded By: Ms. Wodehouse

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.