

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

Members Attending: Aaron Coutu, John Bucci, Jessica David, Laura Kohl, Christopher La Roux, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Leslie Page, Cheryl Space, Michelle Steever, Tien Tran, Kate Wodehouse

Members Absent: Melody Drnach (Chair), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Kenneth Findlay, Doug Norris, Karisa Tashjian

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 June 17, 2024, meeting

Moved By: Ms. David

Seconded By: Ms. Page

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. Summer Reading Program

Summer Reading Program (SRP) child and teen participation was lower than in 2023. 11,312 children and teens participated with more adults (3,400) participating than teens (1,800). There were slightly more than 12,000 children and teen participants in 2023. Approximately 55,000 children and teens attended library programs; 45,000 participants attended programs in 2023. Some libraries have not yet submitted SRP data.

Mr. Coutu noted that some individuals register for formalized programs but do not attend. Ms. Space noted the Community Libraries of Providence have seen reduced program participation, and inquired if early literacy programs should receive more attention. Dr. Lynch reported that statistics indicate child reading skills suffered from the Coronavirus pandemic and that all forms of program engagement have diminished. Mr. Tran spoke

about actions taken by Exeter Public Library that increased program participation. Ms. Steever noted student participation in all school activities, including sports and clubs, has decreased. Ms. Kohl noted that academic students seem more engaged than prior years; possibly due to increased organizational partnerships.

Ms. Mellor will explore national trends and potential actions to increase participation or adjust the program to better meet objectives.

ii. Public Library Annual Survey

The public library annual survey closed on September 15; all but 2 surveys have been submitted. Thirteen libraries have not yet completed disaster preparedness planning certification required for grant-in-aid. OLIS is following up with libraries to address any concerns or issues. Pablo Morales Henry, Network Services Manager, developed a tool to facilitate the process (Simplified Continuity of Operations Plan (SCOOP)) and further refined the tool this year (SCOOP II).

Mr. Coutu inquired if the Continuity of Operations Plan could be opened earlier in July. Ms. Mellor reported that the enhancements took longer than expected and the future goal is to make the tool available annually by July 1, and eventually have it available for updates throughout the year.

iii. Library of RI (LORI) Certification

LORI certification runs concurrently with the annual survey and allows libraries to certify membership in the borrowing network. LORI certification has been completed by all academic libraries and 46 of 48 public libraries; 2 public libraries have requested extensions. Schools have until September 30 to complete the survey; 39 of 79 school libraries have completed it to date, though some schools have indicated they will not rejoin the network this year. Some schools are no longer eligible to join the network and receive delivery because they do not have a librarian. LORI certification is required for interlibrary loan delivery.

iv. AskRI Services

Tutor.com provides online tutoring services in English and Spanish from 2:00-10:00 PM. Most program use is for math and science tutoring. The FY25 contract has been renegotiated at half price with the same service provisions due to low usage. Tutor is committed to public relations outreach and OLIS will promote the service through the Superintendent's Field Notes and Niche Academy webinars. Dr. Lynch inquired if sharing Tutor.com information with afterschool programs would be beneficial and will provide Ms. Mellor a RI Department of Education (RIDE) contact to facilitate communications. A promotional email vetted by OLIS will be sent to school principals; school librarians will be notified of the communication. OLIS will use social media geofencing to promote Tutor in targeted areas such as the urban core.

Learning Express, a program that provides skills and test preparation, is an underutilized AskRI product. OLIS purchased a more expansive product version this year that brings the

Job & Career Accelerator and Learning Express together as an integrated service; the expanded package adds training for cloud-based services such as Amazon Web Services (AWS). The product will be promoted statewide with focused outreach to the adult education community.

Palace, an eBook aggregation platform deployed in partnership with Ocean State Libraries (OSL), has been integrated with the OSL public library catalog (via Aspen Discovery) so that Palace eBooks can be discovered through that catalog.

All AskRI products are freely available to all Rhode Islanders.

B. OLIS Grants (Ms. Baffoni)

OLIS offered four Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant programs over the past 9 months and awarded 7 competitive project grants, 6 competitive mini-grants, 11 professional field experience (PFE) grants, and 41 summer reading grants. The grants are in the final phase of report review and payment processing. Ms. Baffoni will provide a comprehensive report at a future meeting. OLIS may invite grant awardees to present their projects at a future meeting.

The PFE grant internship partnerships between University of RI (URI) graduate students and public libraries were very successful. Ten PFE grants will be available for spring and summer 2025 and their application processes will open at the same time.

Several of the competitive mini grants were focused on collection expansion or accessibility. Providence Public Library (PPL) received a grant for Spanish books on CD, and Cranston's Park View Middle School received a grant for biography and autobiography media.

A review of the SRP grant program will be undertaken this Fall. Staff will evaluate the program to determine if it will continue in its current format or be revised.

Ms. Baffoni and Ms. Mellor extended their gratitude to members who helped review competitive LORI grants.

C. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Digital Equity Grant

OLIS is applying for a NTIA grant in partnership with Providence Public Library (PPL) and the Adult Education program of the RI Department of Education (RIDE). The NTIA is a division of the federal Department of Commerce that oversees the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Broadband Equity, Access, And Deployment (BEAD) program and Digital Equity Act funding. BEAD funding allocated to the State through a different grant program is administered by RI Commerce; OLIS discussed the potential of accessing some of these funds for library programs on digital literacy but was encouraged to apply for additional funding through the NTIA competitive grant program.

The grant proposal seeks to continue and expand a PPL digital literacy project originally funded with \$225,000 from OLIS' American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The proposed project will provide digital literacy training at libraries in the urban core and rural communities and through adult education providers. The proposal also includes funding for OLIS to update public access computers at libraries in distressed communities, thereby strengthening access

to computers in the state's neediest communities. In addition, leveraging OLIS Digital Services unit, the grant will make state websites more accessible and inclusive, particularly to non-English speaking users or individuals with low literacy skills, and to ensure state government websites meet updated ADA requirements for digital services. This expertise would then be shared with municipalities to assist them in making their websites more accessible and inclusive.

The NTIA grant is a 4-year grant with a \$5 million minimum and \$12 million maximum and requires a 10% match. The grant application deadline is September 23. PPL is the lead applicant on the grant due to the challenges of supporting the 4-year project and meeting the match.

D. Continuing Education (Ms. Baffoni)

In-person youth service roundtable meetings and public library director meetings and forums are scheduled. Kelly Metzger, State Data Coordinator, has been working with state library agencies in the northeast on a regional workshop on climate change. 'Adapt and Fortify Your Library Against Extreme Weather' is scheduled for September 24.

OLIS is partnering with School Librarians of RI and URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies on a training series, 'School Librarians as Media Literacy Leaders: Empowering Students Through Media Decoding'.

Select Library Journal professional courses will be available again this year. In addition, online webinars from Niche Academy and Webjunction are being promoted through the OLIS CE Calendar. Registration and access for all continuing education programs is available on the OLIS website.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

No federal or state legislation was discussed.

VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

A. Ms. David

i. Ms. David's organization, Local Return, and the RI Center for the Book will cohost a screening of the documentary *Join or Die* based on Robert Putnam's book *Bowling Alone* about social capital and joining community organizations. The screening is November 9 at the Providence Public Library auditorium; more information is forthcoming. OLIS will include the event on OLIS' public calendar.

ii. Ms. David inquired about the future vision for libraries. Ms. Mellor responded that this has been an ongoing topic for OLIS over the years. Ms. Baffoni helped coordinate the most recent exploration of this topic, a 2018 futures summit at the University of Rhode Island. Ms. Mellor noted that this is a good topic for the board to take up, and that a future summit may be in order, with guidance from the board. Ms. Baffoni added that Emily Goodman, Adult Services Coordinator, attends monthly libraries futures sessions. The Idaho Commission for

Libraries is producing a libraries futures toolkit with an Institute of Museum and Libraries (IMLS) grant.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

The committee was divided into 2 subcommittees to review different areas of the standards. Two issues currently being assessed are library recategorization due to population shifts and open hour requirements due to changes in library usage. The maximum open hours requirement will be 60 hours; the minimum open hours requirement is still being reviewed. Staff responsibilities and community engagement are issues affecting the open hours policy.

OLIS will prepare a draft for the November or December meeting. The revised standards will be organized by topic, more specific in their requirements, and more clearly articulate governing state laws.

B. Public Library Construction Reimbursement Program Regulations: Schedule Development

Representatives from the Town of Middletown attended the June meeting and requested the board review the public library construction regulation reimbursement rates. Since the June meeting, Middletown has notified OLIS that the Town will purchase and renovate a building instead of constructing a new library. The Board will finalize the public library minimum standards before proceeding with the library construction regulations review. Mr. La Roux, Mr. Coutu, and Mr. Bucci volunteered for the library construction regulations review committee.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for October 28, 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: Ms. David

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

The meeting adjourned at 5: 21 p.m.