

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND
The regular meeting of the Library Board of Rhode Island was held on
March 20, 2023
at Cranston Public Library, Computer Lab
1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02920

Members Attending: Heidi Blais, John Bucci, Aaron Coutu, Melody Drnach (Chair), Rosita Hopper, Phyllis Lynch (ex officio), Monica Nazareth-Dzialo, Doug Norris, Leslie Page, Amanda Richman, Robert Sloan

Members Absent: Cristina Amedeo, Annette Feldman, Kenneth Findlay, Louise Herrington, Marcus Mitchell

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

Guests: None

Materials Distributed:

- LBRI Legislative Report March 2023
- Library Revenue by Source (sorted by State Aid) 2023-0320
- Municipal Total Operating Revenue-Source Percentage Breakdown 2023-0320
- Total Library Operating Revenue by Source 2023-0320

I. WELCOME

Ms. Drnach called the meeting to order at 4:18 pm

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the January 09, 2023, meeting

Moved By: Mr. Bucci

Seconded By: Mr. Coutu

The minutes were approved as presented.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES from the February 13, 2023, meeting

Moved By: Mr. Norris

Seconded By: Mr. Bucci

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. Staffing

OLIS completed the interview process for the Library Program Specialist (Resource Sharing Coordinator) position vacated by Chaichin Chen, and a candidate has been identified. The position is anticipated to be filled by May or early June.

ii. State Library Administrative Report

The biennial State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA) Survey was submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in February. The report collects data on OLIS programs and services in FY2022, such as continuing education and statewide databases. The data gathered is useful for state-by-state comparisons among state library administration agencies. OLIS will next complete the SLAA Survey in 2025.

iii. Library Staffing & Salary Report

OLIS has convened an ad hoc working group to explore additional questions on staffing and salaries for the Public Library Annual Survey (PLAS). OLIS already gathers salary information in the PLAS, however, librarians are interested in capturing additional information, such as longevity and education for non-professional positions, to better understand other factors that affect salaries in public libraries.

iv. Summer Reading Program (SRP) Grants

OLIS is soliciting requests for non-competitive Summer Reading Program (SRP) grants. Public libraries may request funds to support summer reading and learning initiatives. Libraries may request \$600 for youth programs, \$300 for branch youth programs, and \$300 for adult programs. Allowable expenditures include supplies, services, and presenters supporting SRP activities. Interested libraries will submit pre-grant request forms to OLIS for review and awarded grants will be administered through the State of RI's new Grants Management System (GMS).

v. Library of RI (LORI) Grants

OLIS will fund up to \$250,000 in competitive LORI grants for projects to be executed by September 30. The grant cycle will be announced this week for proposals ranging between \$5,000 - \$25,000. OLIS will create the grant application in the GMS. Board members interested in reviewing grant applications are requested to contact Ms. Mellor.

OLIS will now use the state's GMS for all grant applications and management of grants supported with Federal funds. The new GMS will allow OLIS staff and invited reviewers to review and score grant applications within the system. All grant documents including payment requests will be managed through the system, though certifying signatures will still be gathered through [DocuSign](#).

vi. Enterprise Technology Strategy & Services (ETSS) Changes

OLIS is part of ETSS in the RI Department of Administration. In a recent re-alignment of agency programs, the digital services team (3 FTE and 2 contractor positions) have been assigned to OLIS and will report to Ms. Mellor. The group's focus is website development

and digital government and will draw on OLIS' information science and management expertise. OLIS staff will continue their projects as usual, though Pablo Morales Henry and the OLIS network services team may assist the ETSS digital services team occasionally. The new positions will not impact OLIS' 13 full-time employee (FTE) status.

B. ALA Congressional Fly-In: Federal Funding for Libraries

Ms. Mellor attended back-to-back meetings in Washington DC this month: the Chief Officers of Library State Agencies (COSLA) meeting on March 7 and the American Library Association (ALA) invitation-only Congressional Fly-In on March 8-9. ALA and COSLA partnered on the event, which resulted in a total of 38 states sending representatives.

Congressional members were requested to increase Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) funding from \$311 million to \$332 million, increase the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) from \$30 million to \$50 million, and provide \$20 million for a nationwide library infrastructure survey that will support potential future efforts to secure federal funding for library construction.

C. Town Hall with Senator Jack Reed

Senator Reed will host two library meetings in Rhode Island on April 3.

The first meeting, which will be held at Providence Public Library (PPL), will showcase digital literacy programs led by PPL and hosted by libraries statewide; PPL's digital literacy program was supported with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Rhode Island will soon receive an influx of Federal funds for digital inclusion programs, including digital skills training and education through the [Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program](#). To receive funds, each state must submit a broadband and digital equity plan; [RI Commerce](#) is drafting the RI state plan with input from the community.

An open town hall meeting will be held in the afternoon at the West Warwick Public Library where libraries will share success stories from projects funded with American Rescue Plan Act funds and discuss current library challenges. Information about the sessions will be posted on the OLIS website and a reminder email issued to public library directors.

D. Talking Books Library (TBL), Duplication on Demand Services

The National Library Service (NLS) currently distributes individual books on digital cartridges and by direct patron download through NLS' Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service. NLS is encouraging its network of regional libraries, such as TBL, to download books on demand for patrons and load multiple books on a single cartridge as opposed to a single book per cartridge. OLIS will implement this new method of book provision incrementally to certain patron groups to enable staff to work with the patrons and assist them in learning how to navigate cartridges with multiple titles. Certain patrons, such as those over 90 years old, will continue to receive cartridges with a single title to minimize confusion. In addition, NLS will soon begin distributing new machines with internet connectivity; currently patrons using NLS machines must download books via a computer and load them onto their machine. NLS is also working with Google and other providers on a voice-activated service for downloading books

on commercial devices. Ms. Nazareth-Dzialo inquired if Victor Readers would be a more efficient device to distribute to patrons. Ms. Mellor noted the Victor Reader is a commercial product; NLS provides its talking book machine to patrons at no cost.

TBL patronage is increasing slowly, following years of decreased participation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 16 new patrons were added in February and 12 in March to date.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. [Minimum Standards for RI Public Libraries](#)

i. Waivers: Hours & Staffing

OLIS conducted a review of library waiver requests. The primary concerns OLIS hears about from libraries are open hours, staffing minimum requirements, and professional staffing requirements, though the total number of waivers requested and granted remains low (requests were received from 3 municipalities in FY22).

Libraries receiving state grant-in-aid (GIA) are required to meet the minimum standards for public libraries. Mr. Coutu reported that hiring is sometimes problematic due to municipal processes. Some libraries report staff loss due to pay inequality.

B. Ad Hoc Committee on State Aid to Libraries Funding Formula

Ms. Mellor reviewed library operating revenue by municipality broken down by local appropriations, state aid and total revenue, providing a breakdown of per capita revenue for each of the three categories (handouts provided). Local appropriations range from a low of \$5.26 per capita in Central Falls to a high of \$89.55 in Barrington; state aid, which is based on local appropriations and expenditures, ranges from a low of \$1.41 per capita in Central Falls to a high of \$19.78 in Jamestown. New Shoreham has disproportionately high per capita spending due to its low population year-round bolstered by a high summer population, with \$325.80 per capita in local appropriations and \$65.02 per capita in state aid. The statewide per capita average is \$46.25 for local appropriations and \$9.87 in state aid.

The board discussed disparities in statewide municipal library funding as well as disparities in library usage among populations within municipalities. Stephen Spohn, Executive Director, Ocean State Libraries (OSL), and Kelly Metzger, OLIS Data Coordinator, are currently studying patterns-of-library use. Mr. Spohn and Ms. Metzger will be invited to present at a future meeting.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Federal & State Legislative Updates

Federal and State legislation about libraries may be found on the OLIS legislative [webpage](#).

i. Rhode Island Legislation

H5380 - Establishes June 19th as a state holiday, to be known as “Juneteenth National Freedom Day”.

H6066 - Exempts employees of school, museum, or libraries from criminal prosecution for circulating obscene publications or shows and selling or exhibiting obscene publications to minors. The RI Library Association (RILA) supports this legislation.

H5739 - Requires that both curriculum and teaching practices in Rhode Island schools protect and respect the civil rights of all members of the school community. RILA opposes this bill.

H5756 - Prohibits the distribution, transfer, or possession of any material that depicts a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct and is obscene and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. RILA opposes this bill.

S0336 - Makes threats of mass violence and false reports of threats to educational, religious, social institutions or civic or fraternal associations a misdemeanor. Mr. Coutu anticipates this bill will also apply to libraries.

ii. Federal Legislation

Federal legislation was not discussed.

VII. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

No board member reports.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

X. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next LBRI meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2023, from 4:15 – 5:45 p.m. at William Hall Library, 1825 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905. Board members will be notified of date or venue changes.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By: Mr. Bucci

Seconded By: Ms. Nazareth-Dzialo

The meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.