

LIBRARY BOARD OF RHODE ISLAND

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair Mark McKenney, Rose Ellen Reynolds, Tovah Reis, Joan Ress Reeves, Alice Barrows, Donna Good, Leslie Mc Donough, Mary Cummings, Peter Deekle, Regina Connor,

Members Absent: William Allen, Cristina Amedeo, Deborah Barchi, Jay Litman, Joshua Teverow

Present from the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS): Anne Parent, Donna DiMichele, Beth Perry; Debbie Cullerton

Observers: Dale Thompson, Shirley Long

Reporting: Debbie Cullerton

Materials Distributed:

1. Draft agenda
2. Talking Times Newsletter – 2 editions
3. Copy of article in Providence Journal on Cranston
3. Brochure from FSCS (Federal – State Cooperative System for Public Library Data)

The meeting was convened at 4:25 p.m.

I. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the November 21, 2005 meeting were moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mark McKenney reported that he has been appointed by the governor to serve on the board of the Providence Public Library. He has attended his first meeting and is pleased to be a part of the board.

Mr. McKenney also stated that he had spoken to those convened for the LibFutures Town Meeting II on January 10. He said that pursuing legislation for a Legislative Commission to study the future of libraries is well worth while, despite the setbacks in 2005, and that LibFutures should not be too hasty to move ahead with a 2006 bond referendum, but 2008 will be here before long. A great deal of political groundwork has to be done to propose funding for the LibFutures initiatives.

Additionally, Mr. McKenney also asked board members to look for candidates to serve on the Library Board. There are vacant positions and every attempt should be made to fill the positions.

III. REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION

Introduction of Shirley Long

Shirley Long was introduced as a proposed new Library Board member. Ms. Long is the director of the South Kingstown Public Library. She has an undergraduate degree in history from URI and received her Master of Library Science from Emporia State University in Kansas. Ms. Long has been very active in the library community over the years. She is the current treasurer of CLAN, was a member of the LibFutures Databases working group, and served on OLIS' LORI Committee. Ms. Long's resume has been sent to the Governor as a recommendation for his appointment to replace Debbie Barchi as representing medium to large public libraries of RI.

SRRC Contract

The contract between OLIS and the PPL for Statewide Reference Resource Center (SRRC) services was finalized and publicized. AskRI.org went live on December 27 at <http://www.askri.org>. This is the SRRC website and offers all holders of a public library card access to World Book Online Reference Center. At AskRI.org, users can connect with the Ask a Librarian service, which offers access via chat, email, or phone for 56 hours a week, which reflects the expanded hours for the SRRC.

Karen Mellor is currently working with RI.gov and PPL to brand and promote the AskRI service through RI.gov and at local libraries. RI.gov is designing a logo for the service and promotional materials and will work with PPL to produce these materials, such as posters. Several libraries have already linked to the service and put links on their home page. The LBRI can take at least partial credit for having stimulated dialogue about askRI.org, when Board members discussed about promoting the "Ask a Librarian" service statewide. OLIS has received good feedback about the new contract, including several expressions of support for the extended telephone reference hours.

OLIS PLA Contest

Given that it can be difficult for many public libraries to send even their directors, let alone any staff, to national conferences, and given that the conference of the Public Library Association will be held in Boston in March 21-25, 2006, OLIS sponsored a contest that offers those who enter the chance to have their registration fee – up to \$300 -- paid by OLIS using Federal LSTA funds. Up to five public library staff members or URI library school students were to be selected.

Seventeen applications for subsidies to attend were received by OLIS. The total amount requested far exceeded the amount available for the subsidies. The final selections were based on the hope to encourage some staff that might otherwise never have the opportunity to participate in a national conference.

The successful candidates were Jon Anderson, Director, Marion Mohr Public Library in Johnston; Kathleen Fitzgerald, Young Adult Librarian, Newport Public Library; Gretchen Hanley, Reference Librarian, Lincoln Public Library; Pam Mead, Branch Librarian, Kingston Free Library in South Kingstown, and Carol Shedd, part-time Reference staffer, Barrington Public Library and also a student at URI GSLIS. It is hoped that they will return with expanded horizons and anecdotes that will be helpful in reporting to the IMLS, OLIS' federal funding agency.

LSTA Funding 2006

Federal LSTA grants for FY 2006 that began October 1, 2005 have not yet been finalized, but Oregon state librarian Jim Scheppke runs a spreadsheet each year to let state librarians know estimated changes. For RI, he believes this will be \$1,050,574 – roughly \$1 per resident (pop. 1,080,632.) This would be an increase of just over \$30,000 from the previous year, which was \$1,020,285. While OLIS would be grateful for any increase, the increases nationwide were not sufficient to trigger the new formula that would particularly help smaller states by doubling the base. Overall, this increase does not break even with the decreases on the State side of OLIS funding over the past several years. The federal funding is now actually higher than the agency funding, which has crept under \$1 million over the last couple of years.

LSTA Annual Report

Ms. Parent commended Donna DiMichele and all the other staff who contributed to the LSTA report for federal FY2005 that was completed just over a week ago.

LibFutures

At the last meeting it was reported that the three working groups: Statewide Databases, One Catalog For All, and Lifelong Learning, have completed their reports, and that these were mounted on the Futures website. The web address is linked from the OLIS website, www.ori.ri.gov. in the yellow column on the right of the homepage. Not all the reports were linked at the time, however, but as of today, the third report on Lifelong Learning has been mounted.

LibFutures owes special thanks to the HELIN consortium (the academic library network) for giving us space after their annual meeting on January 10 to hold a second Town Meeting, to follow up on the one that was held a year ago last December. At that meeting, summaries were given of LibFutures activities to date and the three work group reports, and then the floor was opened up for comments. The meeting provided an opportunity for feedback from those who may not be heavily involved day to day. There was some debate about the best way to pursue funding for the priorities; bond referendum, budget bill, or a combination of both, perhaps even in different years. LibFutures is seeking legislative input at this point on how to proceed, as well as advice on continuing to seek establishment of a Legislative Commission.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Donna Good reported to the Library Board that school libraries “keep struggling along.” The money is so tight, and the demands and needs are growing. Some school librarians are at one school all day, and some, especially elementary school librarians, cover between 2 and 4 schools each week. That means that the libraries are closed often, and all the studies show that student achievement is tied closely to library programs. School libraries are still operating under the BEP (Basic Education Plan-our Standards) of the 1960s!

Ms Good spoke about the Providence school library situation. Melody Johnson, when she was Superintendent of Schools in Providence, requested a staffing waiver from Commissioner McWalters. He did not act on it for a year, thus allowing the waiver to take place while he considered. Two high school librarians in Providence were moved from their high school positions to elementary library positions, thus ousting the elementary librarians. The BEP states that schools with over 1,000 students should have 2 full-time librarians.

A committee from RIEMA (RI Educational Media Association) met with the Commissioner and presented to him the elements of a good library program. He said he knew all that was said, and he wanted to know how RIEMA could help him with the Providence situation. Last spring the Commissioner sent a letter to Providence, RIEMA, and others stating his position. He would not grant the waiver, but he wanted reports and proof that the achievement of students in the Providence schools was in fact improving through the use of good library programs. He said that he was not going to waste money. He wanted proof that two librarians were necessary at those high schools. The administration allows no money because they say the libraries are not used. If they are not used, the reason may be that the materials are outdated from lack of funding. RIEMA met with the Providence librarians and later with the principals of the Providence high schools this past fall. They sent a report to the Commissioner for the first quarter. Now the other reports should come from the Superintendent's office.

Ms. Good asked what role the Library Board could play in this. Would a follow-up letter be of any help?

Discussion followed and it was agreed that a follow-up letter could be helpful. Ms. Good was to gather appropriate information and forward it to the Chair.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget & Planning Meeting

Alice Barrows set the next meeting for the committee for February 27, 2006 at 3:15 p.m., prior to the next LBRI meeting.

Committee on Legislation

Rose Ellen Reynolds would like to establish work on the bipartisan support for the bills on the Legislative Commission. Ms. Reynolds will work on this and contact people with regard to this legislation.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

RI Library Futures

Peter Deekle reported that CRIARL would like the Library Board to get behind and support the RI Library Futures agenda on their initiatives. These are the Statewide Database, One Catalog for All and Lifelong Learning. Discussion followed and it was agreed that the Library Board would go on record indicating their support.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY Mark McKenney and seconded by Rose Ellen Reynolds to send a letter of support to the RI LibFutures Steering Committee indicating the Board's support and endorsing the direction of the proposed initiatives of RI LibFutures .

The motion was unanimously approved by the board.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Donna DiMichele reminded the Board that COLA will be meeting on February 14, 2006 and will present their annual Sweetheart of the Year Award.

Beth Perry brought to the Board's attention the two issues of the Talking Times newsletter that were distributed to the Board. This newsletter is written by the Talking Plus staff which is part of the Office of Library & Information Services.

Ms Perry also commented on the brochure from FSCS (Federal – State Cooperative System for Public Library Data) that had been distributed. She thought the Board would like to read about some of the facts and statistics and how they are promoting libraries.

VIII. FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting February 27, 2006

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.