

RHODE ISLAND COALITION OF LIBRARY ADVOCATES BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 7, 2017, 5:30 P.M.

BARRINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, Senior Center Studio, 281 COUNTY ROAD, BARRINGTON, RI 02806

The COLA Board convened at 5:35; present were Lisa Ashe, Emilie Benoit, Howard Boksenbaum (Chair), Eileen Dyer (RILA), Gale Eaton (Secretary), Neeltje Henneman (Treasurer), Hil Herbst, Lauren Mandel (GSLIS), Cheryl McCarthy (Vice-Chair), Prina Pressburger, Monica Schaberg, and Tom Viall.

Chair's report: Howard distributed copies of Senate Bill 0106, amending the RI Board of Education Act to mandate instruction in media literacy (introduced in the General Assembly 1 February 2017 and referred to the Senate Education Committee); also, to remind members of a key resource, he distributed a printout of the R.I. Legislative Updates page from the OLIS website, olis.ri.gov. Sadly, he reported that Patricia Raskin has resigned from the Board. (She has, however, agreed to serve as a non-Board member of the 2017-18 Nominating Committee.)

Secretary's report: Minutes of the January 7 meeting were approved. A draft copy of the February newsletter was circulated; Gale plans to mail it out after 1) the nominating committee's report is complete, and 2) Joan Ress Reeves has had a chance to edit the document and inserts.

Treasurer's report: Neeltje reported that we have received \$275.00 in dues and \$0.08 in interest, bringing our total to \$8,423.32.

Committees

Membership: Gale e-mailed public library directors, trustees, and Friends groups, inviting (urging) them to renew organizational memberships, apply for 2017 Reeves Awards, and recruit individual COLA members. No response has been received via e-mail; we will watch the PO box and may try follow-up phone calls. Neeltje brought 9 membership forms to the meeting; all were renewals by current or past members. Lisa Ashe's offer to head the committee was eagerly accepted.

Nominating: Our slate was nearly complete, with three officers (Chair, Cheryl McCarthy; Secretary, Gale Eaton; Treasurer, Neeltje Henneman); three board members for 2017 – 2020 (Howard Boksenbaum, John Bucci, and Ron Heroux) and four invitations pending; and a 2017 – 2018 nominating committee (Gale Eaton, Emilie Benoit, and Patricia Raskin). Leaving the Board are Hil Herbst (2017), Patricia Raskin (2018), and Alisson Walsh (2017).

Speaker's Bureau: Howard reported that this project has stalled for lack of time and energy; we hope it may be revived in the future.

Updates from organizational reps

Rhode Island Library Association (RILA): Eileen reported that she and Ed Garcia (her colleague on RILA's Legislative Action Committee) met with RILA lobbyist Steve Alves; the association is pushing for full funding of library grant-in-aid at the full 25% level, and is supporting S 0106. Besides joining OLIS and COLA to present Deb Hoadley's April 4 "Community Building & Engagement" program, RILA is sponsoring RI Library Day on April 8 and has reserved the State House Rotunda from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

on April 13 for a legislative awareness event just before COLA's annual meeting. More on RILA at rila.wildapricot.org.

Office of Library & Information Services (OLIS): Karen Mellor forwarded her report via Tom Viall. The Governor's budget for FY2018 flat-funds grants-in-aid for libraries, effectively lowering the percentage from 23.7% in FY2017 to 22.8%. AskRI is also level-funded, after a \$311,000 cut last year; OLIS is working to maintain the current line-up of databases.

OLIS saw a slight increase in funding, to cover increased personnel costs. 13 FTEs were included and funded in the budget; we currently have 11 positions filled, and are in the midst of interviewing to fill our new Adult Services Coordinator position, which was created by reassigning assisting staff positions.

Meanwhile, the StudioRhode Next Generation Library Challenge—a program led by the RI Office of Innovation in collaboration with OLIS—kicked off on January 23. Each applicant library will outline its reimagined role as a digital community hub for multigenerational and inclusive learning, leveraging the Next Generation framework. One library will be selected to receive a donation of technology equipment and resources including professional services from Apple Inc. Partnerships among libraries or other community-based organizations are encouraged. One benefit already: Governor Raimondo remained engaged throughout the kick-off program, paying close attention to panelists Karisa Tashjian, Aaron Coutu, Cheryl Space, and Katherine Boden.

The COLA-RILA-OLIS event, "Community Building & Engagement: Partnerships at Work," has been posted on the OLIS website. We encourage COLA members to sign up for the session at <http://www.olis.ri.gov/services/ce/individual.php?code=cbae0404>.

Regarding advocacy for library funding, I'm not sure what is on RILA's docket for this session, Eileen can address that better than I. I do think it is imperative that library advocacy efforts align and that everyone is working towards a common goal. And perhaps those goals are 25% and restored funding for AskRI?

URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS): Lauren reported that progress toward rebuilding GSLIS faculty strength, with smooth progress on a tenure-track search for GSLIS and another for a Harrington School faculty member to teach GSLIS courses. She passed around copies of a 2017 paper, "LIS Education in an Interdisciplinary Frame: Integrating Digital Media into the Ethics of Digital Personhood," by Valerie Karno (Director of GSLIS) and Adam David Roth (Director of the Harrington School of Media and Communication). She responded to questions about student enrollment (holding steady, although difficult to pin down because URI student data attribute dual masters' students to History, English, etc., rather than GSLIS) and accreditation (on track). And in good news for COLA, the GSLIS faculty has put forward two excellent scholarship nominees: Karen Mueller for the Bergeron Award, and Denise Phillips for the Aldrich Award. The Board having no objection to these students, they will receive their awards at our annual meeting on April 13.

Consortium of RI Academic and Research Libraries (CRIARL): Sue Warthman reported via e-mail that CRIARL met at the Steamship Historical Society of America in January and had a tour of their impressive facility. A website committee was formed, and also a nominating committee to appoint a slate for Vice President/ President Elect. Results of the HELIN survey were reviewed and summarized by Dawn Emsellem, Director at Salve.

School Librarians of RI (SLRI): Sarah Morenon e-mailed her report to Howard, who updated us on 1) plans for the March 10 SLRI conference, with RI Chief Innovation Officer Richard Culatta as keynote speaker, and 2) a *Cranston Herald* article on school libraries, “Students learning to discern real from fake news,” which ties into 3) S 0106. The bill does not specify who would be responsible for delivering the mandated media literacy education, and SLRI aims to tighten the connection to school libraries; Sarah has reached out to AASL’s Sylvia Norton for input on this.

Cheryl responded to the report, and circulated a handout from the January 11 “Connecting ESSA to School Libraries” training workshop Sarah announced at our January 7 meeting. The materials can be accessed at <http://essa.aasl.org/forums/topic/rhode-island-011217/> and should prove useful in linking ESSA funding to RIDE proposals. Unfortunately, since RI does not mandate school libraries but prefers that each district set its own local priorities, the case has to be made on a local level, over and over. Cheryl has been working on advocacy material for Middletown, and agreed to send copies to the Board so we can develop a template to be adapted for each municipality. Gale and Howard agreed to help edit; Howard suggested that the edited template should then be sent not just to the Board but to the membership at large, calling for statewide participation.

Old Business: We agreed to defer old business.

New Business

Library Board of RI (LBRI) Funding Study: A subcommittee of the LBRI undertook a Public Library Funding Formula Report; both the full 29-page report and a 2-page summary are posted on the OLIS website at <http://www.olis.ri.gov/aboutus/lbri/funding/index.php>. Tom gave us a brief survey of the committee’s deliberations.

Currently, RIGL 29-6-2 provides for the state to support local public library services in an amount that is at least 25% of the amount appropriated and expended in the second preceding fiscal year by the city or town from local tax revenues and funds from the public library’s private endowment that supplement the municipal appropriation. Along with major advantages (e.g., incentives to municipalities to fund their local libraries to levels that meet state requirements), this formula has admitted drawbacks. A recent study by the Providence League of Women Voters suggested that it privileges wealthier at the expense of poorer communities, and should be rebalanced to correct what seems to be an injustice. On the other hand, as Tom reminded us, the existing system allows users of any public library in the state to draw materials from any other library – and for some of those wealthier communities, the library GIA may represent the lion’s share of their annual state aid, while necessary state aid to distressed municipalities is more extensive.

So the committee set “must-have” features for any new formula. The formula should obviously support the best possible library service statewide and create no disincentive to local library funding, and the committee ran models to see how they would achieve this. At current funding levels, for instance, if the formula was based on population alone, distressed communities would be helped—but the “affluent” would be too harshly penalized.

LBRI is not recommending any change to the existing formula until funding rises to the full 25%. At that point, an 80/20 division – 80% of the total to be distributed according to the current formula, and 20% reallocated to benefit the distressed communities – would be feasible.

Membership cooperation among COLA, CORI, and RILA: Kieran Ayrton e-mailed a report from RILA about the complexities of a joint membership program for RILA, COLA, and Cornucopia of RI. Top complexity: the Apricot pricing structure. Would COLA and CORI be enough to propel RILA into a higher payment bracket, thus running all three organizations into bankruptcy in a few months? We agreed to consider this later. (CORI reportedly has only 20 members. COLA sends its newsletter to just under 350 members, of whom only 54 have paid in 2015, 2016, and/or 2017. At least three board members present are also CORI members, and joint membership in COLA and RILA is probably very common; perhaps adding us would expand RILA less than feared. We don't know.)

Legislation: We had already discussed the 2018 budget and S-0106 under other headings.

Future meeting dates and locations: Cheryl undertook to identify available sites and survey the Board on preferences for day of the week, time, and place for next year's meetings.

Adjournment: As Howard detected a general Brownian motion to collect belongings and shrug into outwear, nobody actually moved adjournment. We drifted off at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gale Eaton,

Secretary