

Introduction

Rhode Island. A small state, a wealth of library resources, and a population who cares about libraries. An opportunity to create innovative library services for the 21st century.

Certainly all of these things were on the minds of the Coalition of Library Advocates as they pondered the future of Rhode Island libraries and committed themselves to undertaking a study to identify new possibilities for Rhode Island libraries. Ten years had passed since the last comprehensive statewide study conducted by Peat Marwick Main & Co. This study led to positive changes for libraries including the establishment of the Library Board of Rhode Island, direct state aid to local governments based on their support of public library services, designation of a statewide reference resource center, and network funding to support cooperation and resource sharing among all types of libraries.

Since the last study there have been significant accomplishments. Rhode Islanders are benefiting from the Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN), a statewide catalog of public library holdings, increased state aid to public libraries, state funding to support construction of new public library facilities, a revitalized Office of Library and Information Services, and a statewide library board to represent library interests to state government.

With all that accomplished the question became ... what next?

Fast forward to 1999. Technology is transforming libraries in ways that were not even imagined ten years ago. People are seeking and finding information at their desktops, in their homes, and in the classroom. The relationship between librarian and user is changing, with a greater emphasis on training users to become self-sufficient information seekers. At the same time, technology is isolating. People are seeking a sense of community beyond the electronic frontier. Libraries are becoming more important as a places that allow people to interact with their friends, neighbors and peers.

These two conditions – rapidly emerging information technologies and the importance of community - are creating a new set of challenges for libraries. Librarians are facing a choice: continue business as usual, which may limit the number of people who use and value libraries, or create new paths for service to attract new users who can benefit from the expertise and knowledge of library staff.

The second choice is more difficult, untried and untested. It will require fundamental shifts in the way the library community conducts its business and the creation of a library

community where people work together and share leadership to address issues of common concern. It reflects a world in which no library can address the needs of its community alone, but a world where, using the collective strength of the whole, libraries can make serious contributions in addressing issues that will significantly enhance the educational, economic, and social fabric of the state.

Library Development Solutions believes that Rhode Island's library community is up to this challenge.

About this Report

Mining People's Knowledge

Over the last five months, Library Development Solutions engaged a cross-section of citizens, library people, public officials, community leaders and others in extensive conversations about the future of Rhode Island libraries. Thirteen focus groups and interviews encompassing more than 150 people were held in locations throughout the state. Thirty-five people attended the Library Board of Rhode Island's October retreat. The purpose was to hear how people told the story of their libraries, where they see libraries headed in Rhode Island, and what their dreams are for the future development of libraries. Here is the methodology we used:

Librarian Focus Groups

First we talked with individuals who work in Rhode Island's libraries. These individuals represented all staff levels, all types of libraries, and a variety of library organizational interests. These discussions provided important insights about how the library community views library service today, what their hopes and dreams are for the future, and what it will take to make their dreams become reality.

Conversations with Users

Next we interviewed library users, and in some cases, people who don't ordinarily use libraries, to hear about their hopes and concerns. These people offered useful insights about how libraries currently meet or don't meet their informational, educational, and social needs. The user focus groups provided a unique perspective on the type of things we can do to make libraries meaningful to users' everyday lives.

Leader Interviews

After the focus groups, we interviewed those identified as leaders in the state's business and political communities, such as elected officials, heads of major foundations and community organizations. In these conversations, people told us about their concerns, their ideas for moving libraries ahead, and their reactions to what we had learned in the focus groups.

Developing Strategies

Finally, to build on what we had heard in the focus group discussions and interviews, we met several times with the COLA Library Study Committee to develop strategies for advancing Rhode Island libraries in the next three to five years. We asked the COLA group to react to what we had heard, identify key action points for the future, and identify obstacles that the Rhode Island library community will need to overcome to achieve success.

Organization of the Report

We divided this report into four sections.

In **Community Voices**, you will see how those we spoke to described their library and information environment and learn about the concerns they expressed about libraries in Rhode Island and their future.

In **Rhode Island's Library Resources**, you will find a snapshot of library services currently provided throughout the state.

The third section, **New Challenges**, examines the aspirations people have for libraries in Rhode Island and focuses on a number of challenges for the future.

The report concludes with a section entitled **Seeing Rhode Island Libraries Differently**. In this section we present several recommendations for ways that libraries can advance in Rhode Island.

Community Voices

When the Rhode Island librarians and users talk about libraries they speak proudly about their achievements and what libraries have to offer. They tell the story of a library community that has worked together to accomplish shared goals and a community that shares a strong commitment to public service. Library users speak about the importance of books, the place of the local library in a community's quality of life, and the ways in which libraries can help connect people with ideas.

Rhode Islanders should feel proud of libraries. Because of its size, the state is able to provide a level of service that is often unattainable in other states that are dealing with larger populations and geographic areas. Still there are challenges: challenges that present barriers to moving to the next level of service.

Technology is Changing the Way Libraries Provide Service

Rapid changes in technology are straining the budgets and resources of many libraries. Library users need continuous assistance in learning how to use technological tools to

access information. Staff needs training in using new technologies and software. Budgets

are not increasing enough to support the purchase of new and replacement technologies and to keep pace with the demand for new library books and materials. While patrons and librarians view CLAN as an enormous success, the library community needs to plan for the next generation of this shared database. The basic telecommunications network that allows information to flow freely between the state's libraries and its users needs high-speed communication lines that will speed the transfer of information. Basic technological tools such as e-mail, fax machines, and office software needs to be available and widely used in all of the state's libraries.

Users Want Expanded Access to the State's Libraries

People want ease of use and access without barriers from town to town and across type of library. They want lots of books, user-friendly technology, savvy and welcoming librarians and a 24-hour-per-day, 7-day-per-week model of access that enables them to find what they want from home as well as in the library. They see libraries as community centers and cultural resources.

Staffs Need to Upgrade Their Skills and Increase Their Knowledge

Technology is requiring many library staff to update their skills and learn new ways of providing service. Staff needs to learn how to become effective trainers and teachers as they are called upon to teach others how to use the technological library. User expectations for personalized customer service require a new way of thinking about librarian and user interaction at the public service desk, on the telephone, and behind the scenes. Access to affordable training and continuing education is a critical element in retooling libraries for the next century.

Current Structures and Legislation Need to be Examined

The library community is not willing to stay in a business-as-usual mode. They recognize that the ability to change is essential to the future of libraries. Existing legislation governing the state grant-in-aid program needs to be strengthened if the state is to achieve its goal of maintaining local support for libraries and providing a strong base of state support. A final push to achieve the 25% state funding level by 2000 will place Rhode Island in the forefront of significant state support for public libraries. The achievement of the 25% state support level cannot mark the end of building financial support for libraries. Careful consideration needs to be given to additional dedicated sources of funding to support libraries. State legislation for RHILINET and the statewide reference resource center need to be examined and updated to reflect changes in the library and information environment.

Libraries Can Achieve the Shared Vision Through a Process of Collaboration

Librarians and users recognize that no single library is in a position to be all things to all people. Those interviewed spoke eloquently about the need for collaboration and shared leadership to accomplish the vision for the library of the future. Library users are concerned that libraries and other community agencies, like schools, learn how to cooperate to share resources and provide more effective service to the communities they

New Possibilities: Rhode Island Libraries for the Next Millennium

serve. Library groups in the state need to rethink their mission and consider meeting across type-of-library lines in order to collaborate with and learn from each other.

Rhode Islanders are Unaware of the Value of Libraries

Without strong citizen support, libraries will be unable to achieve the level of funding needed to provide 21st century service. While Rhode Island libraries have a core group of

advocates to speak on their behalf, the community at large is generally unaware of what libraries have to offer. There is little recognition about the way in which libraries contribute to the overall quality of life in Rhode Island. We heard from users and librarians alike that there is a need for a statewide public awareness campaign aimed at governing officials and the general public.

Rhode Island Library Resources

Rhode Island has a library structure that when woven together creates an effective method for delivering library service to its users. This system is based on a type of library approach with informal and formal agreements for resource sharing and cooperation that permits users to obtain materials from any library in the state, US or world.

State Level Support

- **Library Board of Rhode Island**
A statewide group composed of citizens and representatives from libraries of all types. The Library Board of Rhode Island advises the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) on policy issues, supports legislative initiatives, and acts as an advocacy group on behalf of libraries.
- **Office of Library and Information Services**
This state level office replaced the Department of State Library services, which had been established in 1964. OLIS is responsible for LSTA grants, RHILINET, LORI, construction grants, consulting services to libraries, the Talking Books program, local library development, and services to state government.
- **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**
State-level department responsible for K-12 education.
- **Office of Higher Education**
State-level office responsible for overseeing the state's higher education institutions.
- **Rhode Island State Library**
Established in 1852, the Rhode Island State Library provides assistance to members of the General Assembly in research and preparation of proposed legislation. The library, which has more than 150,000 volumes, also houses the official documents of the State of Rhode Island.
- **The Rhode Island State Law Library**
The law library's primary mission is to meet the reference and research needs of the bench and bar. As a publicly funded institution, the library is also open to the public and dedicated to the public's right to legal information. The library collects, disseminates, and makes accessible all primary sources of American law as well as a large selection of secondary materials.

Statewide Programs to Support Cooperation and Resource Sharing

- **Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN)**
A consortium of public libraries that provides access to 3 million items owned by 45 member libraries. CLAN cards can be used at any CLAN library to borrow materials.
- **Rhode Island Library Network (RHILINET)**
A state-funded network that supports cooperation and resource sharing among libraries of all types. RHILINET supports statewide delivery, ILL, OCLC First Search, and the Library of Rhode Island (LORI) web site.
- **Consortium of Rhode Island Academic and Research Libraries (CRIARL)**
Consortium of Rhode Island's academic and research libraries. Supports the CRIARL Union List of Serials.
- **Higher Education Library Information Network (HELIN)**
A consortium of state and privately supported academic libraries that provides access to items owned by the 6 member libraries.

New Possibilities: Rhode Island Libraries for the Next Millennium

- **RILINK**
Pilot project to create a web-based online union catalog of school library collections to facilitate the sharing of resources.
- **Association of Rhode Island Health Sciences Libraries (ARIHSL)**
Facilitates resource sharing among the state's health science libraries and publishes a union list of medical journals in RI health science libraries.
- **Statewide Reference Resource Center**
Under contract with the state, the Providence Public Library provides direct reference service to the public and back-up reference to librarians using its unique and specialized collections and electronic databases.

Public, Academic, School and Special Libraries

- **Public Libraries**
Forty-six (46) libraries provide service to all 39 Rhode Island cities and towns. Some are organized as municipal libraries while others are non-profit corporations.
- **School Libraries**
More than 400 school libraries serve the a K-12 population in Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns.
- **Academic Libraries**
Seventeen (17) private and publicly-funded academic libraries.
- **Special Libraries**
Twenty (20) special libraries serve business, the health community and state government.

Library Advocacy Groups

- **Coalition of Library Advocates**
A citizen advocacy group that supports library initiatives.
- **Rhode Island Library Association (RILA)**
A professional association of librarians, library staff, library trustees, and library supporters whose purpose is to promote the profession of librarianship and to improve the visibility, accessibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness of library and information services throughout Rhode Island.
- **Rhode Island Educational Media Association (RIEMA)**
A professional organization representing school library media professionals and support staff working for school library media, computer, and instructional technology programs.
- **Special Libraries Association**
A professional association of librarians who work in special libraries.

New Challenges

Rhode Island has a unique history with regard to library cooperation and resource sharing. The size of the state allows people to move easily from one physical location to another. State funding, especially since the mid-1990's, has provided significant support to public libraries and support for a technological infrastructure that permits the sharing of resources among the state's libraries. The state's commitment to provide 25% of the funding for local public libraries is unmatched by other states. The challenge for this study was:

- Examine what works in today's library and information environment
- Determine how the current situation could be improved by addressing technical or other types of legislative needs
- Identify areas where library service in Rhode Island could be taken to the next stage of development in a way that would benefit users of all types of libraries.

In thinking about the type of recommendations to include in the plan, we considered the messages we heard from the library and user community and thought about the issues raised in the focus groups, Library Board Retreat, and COLA Library Study Committee. From those discussions we identified a series of new challenges – strategic issues that need to be addressed by the library community if it is to respond to the needs and demands of the people served.

Rhode Island Library Organizations are Fragmented and Territorial

Library consortia in Rhode Island deal with a variety of issues that address the needs of their particular users. There is little interaction among the type-of-library groups, which leads to single-type library cooperation rather than multi-type library cooperation. Rhode Island is an ideal state for multi-type library cooperation. Its size, the breadth of its library collections and diverse but small population make multi-type library cooperation easier to achieve. For multi-type library cooperation to succeed, the library community must abandon its belief in the uniqueness of issues by type of library and stress its value that sharing resources across type-of-library borders is possible.

Strong, Diverse and Shared Leadership is Necessary to Address the Library and Information Needs for the Next Century

Neither individual libraries nor OLIS can take on the burden of providing all the funding and support necessary to transform the state's library landscape. Strong, diverse and shared leadership among all librarians representing all types of libraries can contribute to the quilt of ideas needed to create 21st century service. In a shared leadership model, all must understand the concerns and aspirations of the library community as a whole. They must serve as connectors among individuals and organizations throughout the state who can work together to accomplish the shared vision.

Community Library Services Must Address the Unique Needs of Their Constituencies

Multi-type library cooperation cannot address the unique concerns of specific communities served by libraries in Rhode Island. Community library services must be preserved and resources strengthened if local needs are to be addressed in a meaningful way. With more state support for library programs that benefit the greatest number of users, local libraries of all types can reallocate funds to address the needs of their communities that cannot be met in the statewide program.

Rhode Island Will Be Part of a Larger Linked System of Libraries that Provide Information to People When and Where They Need It

The creation of a Rhode Island Electronic Library is a beginning link in what can eventually become a New England regional library and northeast electronic library. In the near future, Rhode Island and other states will need to consider the economies of scale that can accrue by building larger purchasing blocks to deal with vendors offering online databases.

Seeing Rhode Island Libraries Differently

Common Dreams

The Library Board of Rhode Island Retreat set the stage for the statewide study with the enthusiasm and ideas expressed by the conference participants. What became clear during this session was the need to create statewide library initiatives that would respond to user needs and capture the imagination of library users, potential users and funders. The group agreed that new initiatives should marshal the resources and capabilities of all types of libraries in the state to create a virtual library environment which permits users to move effortlessly among the state's libraries without regard to boundaries.

The sentiment expressed during the retreat was echoed in the focus group sessions held during November 1998. Librarians and users shared a belief that Rhode Island's library community has the potential to create new models of service that might be impossible elsewhere because of size and geographic barriers. Librarians want to position libraries to be in the forefront of the information revolution with cutting edge services, funding to support the human and physical resources that will allow that to take place, and an infrastructure that will support the rapid transfer and delivery of information throughout the state. Library users want to receive quick access to library resources at all hours of the day and in convenient locations. They also want to preserve and celebrate the experience of the library as a physical location that encourages cross-fertilization of ideas and human interaction.

Creating a Vision

During the last few years there have been a variety of visions articulated for the type of library service desired for Rhode Islanders. For purposes of this report, the vision statement included in the most recent LSTA plan was reviewed along with the Library Board of Rhode Island's vision and suggestions for a statewide vision articulated at the October Library Board retreat. Based on these items, here is a proposed vision to guide the development of library services in Rhode Island for the next three years.

Our Dream

We want Rhode Islanders to be amazed by their state's libraries. We want them to use libraries on a daily basis as they seek information to assist with everyday decisions in their work, personal life and intellectual pursuits. We want them to think about libraries as centers of community life and activity. We will develop a network of libraries that offer comfortable facilities to encourage interaction and connections among the community, along with an atmosphere and service attitude that invites people to enjoy the pleasure of reading and learning.

We want libraries and their resources to be readily accessible to everyone regardless of their geographic location, their level of income, access to technology, or disability. We will create a virtual library that provides electronic access to all the collections and

resources of Rhode Island's 600 libraries in an easy-to-use Internet-based environment available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Our virtual library will be a gateway to Rhode Island library resources, the Internet and the World Wide Web. We will make sure that Rhode Islanders have access to our virtual library by creating a computer network that provides electronic access to the electronic resources in schools, in public spaces, in the workplace, and in libraries.

Recommendations

Our proposed recommendations fall into four categories:

- new initiatives
- funding
- infrastructure
- governance

In preparing these recommendations, the needs of library users and potential library users have served as the guiding principles for each suggestion. While not all of the recommendations provide a direct benefit to users, many provide indirect benefits that will allow local libraries to focus resources on meeting specific community needs. Building a statewide infrastructure with state funding will facilitate the transfer of information and provide selected services on a centralized basis. Libraries can then reassign existing staff to focus on the public service and training needed and desired by today's library users.

SECTION ONE: NEW INITIATIVES

Recommendation One:

Create a digital information environment for Rhode Island residents, students and businesses so everyone is assured access to a core set of information resources that will prepare them for the 21st century -- an "electronic information tool-kit".

What is It?

Expand on the Library of Rhode Island concept by including new components that are designed to meet the needs of users -- LORI will become the Rhode Island virtual library. Building on successful models in use in Michigan, Ohio and Georgia, LORI should provide the following:

- A linked catalog of all the state's multi-type library holdings, including serials, using a common interface that allows across platform searching with user-initiated interlibrary loan. (See Recommendation 2)

- A statewide union list of serials that expands on the CRIARL list.
- Access to commercial electronic databases from the library or via password from one's home, office, dorm or classroom: Database access should include full-text periodicals (EBSCO, InfoTrac, OCLC First Search, etc.) and other specialized databases (The Electric Library, KidsCat, World Book, etc.) that would form the building blocks of the "tool-kit". Other types of databases may include a general reference database, health or consumer information databases, or a reader's advisory database like Novelist.
- Rhode Island Government Information.
- Rhode Island Library Information. (Links to library home pages and a directory of RI libraries)
- Information about RI communities.
- Subject access to Internet resources: easy links organized by a network of collection specialists to provide users with access to Internet resources in a variety of categories. Subject categories may include:
 - business, economics and labor;
 - children and young adults
 - education
 - government, politics and the law
 - health
 - the arts and humanities
 - links to libraries in RI, NE and the US and the world
 - Rhode Island Information
 - current events
 - recreation and leisure
 - science and the environment
 - social issues and social services.
- A real-time, 24-hour online and telephone reference desk.

LORI can offer additional value-added services that may be of interest to specific communities of users and not others. For example, the academic library community may want to license and mount on LORI-password protected access to research databases that would be of interest to faculty and students but not of general value to the community at large. The same might be true of the public, special and school library communities.

Why Do It?

Libraries are facing increased competition from other information providers and other states that are organizing and packaging information in ways that make it readily

accessible to users at any time of the day or night. While people will continue to enjoy the experience of visiting a library, issues related to convenience of use and universal access cannot be ignored. Rhode Island's lack of a strong statewide public transportation system makes libraries inaccessible for a portion of the population. Creating an electronic library and providing users with easy access to information organized and provided by the RI library community can help people in meeting their basic information needs, enhance the state's economic development, improve access to vital information that assists people in meeting the demands of everyday life, and improve the quality of education. This recommendation recognizes that universal access to the Internet is not yet a reality for all RI residents but ensures that everyone, regardless of geographic location, has easy access to these resources through their public, academic, school or special library as well as in their home or business.

How to Do It

Funding for the basic components of LORI would be the state's responsibility. The Office of Library and Information Services recommended in a recent report to the governor and legislature that \$500,000 be allocated in FY 1999/2000 to support access to electronic databases. Additional funding should be secured to allow for expanded access to databases, develop the linked catalog, create digital resources, and provide the kind of staffing and support needed for LORI's development. (See Recommendation 6) Ongoing costs for the basic network components would be determined by the number of databases offered as part of the electronic tool kit, the number of site licenses, etc.

Funding for additional databases may be funded on a cost-sharing basis with the state supporting a specific percentage and the local institutions supporting the remaining percentage.

Operation

Operation of LORI should be part of OLIS and should assume the current RHILINET operation. RHILINET and LORI should merge into a new oversight and development function. Additional staff should be hired to support a number of LORI operations:

- a LORI director to work with the advisory/governing board
- LORI technical staff to ensure that technical capacity is in place to support the network and to ensure that all libraries have high-speed Internet connections that will enable them to access the network
- staff to negotiate licensing agreements with vendors

The governance of LORI should come from a LORI board representative of academic, public, special, and school libraries as well as the chief executive officer of OLIS and the chair of the Library Board of RI. This group would be responsible for establishing a plan for LORI's ongoing development, soliciting input from the library community and users and potential users, and providing guidance in the development of the virtual library. The LORI Board will report to OLIS and the Library Board of Rhode Island.

Revise RIGL 37-2-56: Purchasing

This revision would make it possible for all libraries to participate in master price agreements under state legislation.

Recommendation Two:

Enable Rhode Islanders to easily obtain library materials and information by creating a single database of library holdings through an interface that links all of Rhode Island's integrated library systems.

Why Do It?

With a state as small as Rhode Island, creating a single linked online library system that captures the holdings of all the state's libraries becomes a manageable and realistic project. This could become a sub-set of the LORI program with a separate staff and program manager. This transparent interface would allow users to search among all types of libraries, to reserve and request materials, and simplify their ability to locate needed information. The Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) should administer the system and provide funds for obtaining necessary hardware and software that will allow the interface to take place. Management of the statewide linked database by the OLIS would permit local libraries to use local funding to address local needs.

How To Do It

OLIS should convene an Interface Task Force to work with HELIN, CLAN, and RILINK to discuss details associated with creating a linked statewide database including the determination of policies for this initiative. All parties would agree to participate in a discussion of system needs and upgrades based on local needs. The state would assume the total cost of operating the interface and providing necessary upgrades. The state-funded database should be a web-based system with high-speed communication lines.

Recommendation Three:

Provide library users with access to current technology by establishing a technology support and replenishment fund.

Why Do It?

Many of the state's libraries have made significant investments in information technology to support the delivery of service. The need to continuously upgrade and add equipment is exceeding the ability of many institutional budgets to accommodate new technology and library materials. The state should establish a stable source of funding to support technology initiatives that will result in improved delivery of library service to users. A long-term funding source should be established to ensure that all libraries, regardless of funding source, have access to funds to support these technological improvements. The state of Texas has already passed legislation to support this type of endeavor. The Texas Telecommunication Infrastructure fund requires telecommunications providers to contribute to a fund for schools and libraries. New Jersey is seeking similar legislation with the hope of generating \$150 million a year for

ten years. A permanent source of funding for library technology initiatives would preclude the need to continually seek funding from the legislature.

How to Do It

Examine current legislation in other states and develop legislation that would require telecommunications providers to contribute to a fund for schools and libraries. The proposed legislation should reflect elements from the agreement already in place with Bell Atlantic. Identify telecommunication providers serving Rhode Island and the potential amount of funds that could be raised with proposed assessment.

Recommendation Four:

Foster a love of reading and improve literacy through the establishment of an early literacy reading initiative.

Why Do It?

Many children come to school without the basic foundation needed to ensure reading success. Lack of in-home access to resources that support early literacy, inadequate reading resources in day care centers and nursery schools, and lack of access to reading programs in public libraries may be contributing factors to this situation. The State of Rhode Island needs to invest a significant amount of funding to ensure that every child, regardless of geographic location, race or income, has the ability to achieve reading competency. Libraries and schools can work together to develop partnerships that will develop approaches to ensure that all children are reading at or above grade level by third grade.

How To Do It

Develop state legislation that specifies a series of activities designed to ensure reading success including local plans for methods, strategies and activities that will be used to teach reading; a process for identifying at-risk children; the establishment of school and library partnerships to improve reading and pre-reading skills; and programs to ensure parent involvement in creating reading success for their children. Request state funds to support the program.

SECTION TWO: FUNDING

Recommendation Five:

A. Provide Rhode Islanders with adequately funded public libraries by continuing efforts to increase, by the year 2000, the state grant-in-aid program to public libraries to represent 25% of local expenditures.

B. Revise the current grant-in-aid legislation to include a proviso that state grant-in aid funds will be used at the local level to support statewide policy initiatives identified by OLIS, the Library Board of Rhode Island, and a Task Force from the Rhode Island Library Community.

Why Do It?

The State of Rhode Island needs to provide its residents with a consistent level of public library service despite variations in a local community's ability to pay for its libraries. Providing significant state support for public libraries will ensure that local libraries have the ability to address local concerns. Significant state support provides incentives to local communities to raise the level of support for libraries in order to receive a larger state grant.

Discussions at the Library Board of Rhode Island Retreat and during focus group sessions revealed that many librarians are concerned about many municipalities' use of state funds to offset local expenditures. Current legislation specifies that funds received from the state shall not be used to supplant funds from local tax revenues, yet it appears that this is the case in many communities. The development of policy initiatives such as family literacy, and information literacy, will require communities to spend the state's investment on programs that are targeted to address statewide concerns.

How To Do It

State grant-in-aid funds should be placed in a separate account at the local level, allocated in the library's annual budget, and accounted for separately. OLIS, in conjunction with the Library Board of Rhode Island and discussions with other library groups, will develop a biennial list of policy initiatives for which state aid funds can be targeted. Public libraries receiving grant-in-aid would be responsible for submitting plans to OLIS detailing how they will meet the policy initiatives.

Revise RIGL 29-6-2 Public Library Services

This change is proposed to allow grants based on criteria other than local expenditures to be included in the state share and to remove language related to the year 2000.

Recommendation Six:

Increase awareness of libraries by initiating a statewide public awareness campaign to call attention to the value of the state's libraries and how they help improve the quality of life for Rhode Islanders.

Why Do It?

Librarians and library users are concerned that the public not view libraries as marginal institutions that serve the needs of only a small segment of the communities they serve. In the past there was a staff member specifically dedicated to the public relations function at OLIS; however, that position was eliminated several years ago during the last economic downturn. Libraries need to remain at the forefront of the public's attention to gain support. It is particularly important to reach people who do not traditionally use libraries.

How to Do It

Designate state and/or federal funds to support a contract for a statewide awareness campaign to call attention to the services offered by the state's libraries. The development of LORI provides a great opportunity to market libraries and their value to the state's economic vitality and quality of life. Establish a Marketing/Public Relations Task Force to work with the successful firm in guiding the campaign.

Recommendation Seven:

Initiate a statewide referendum or public question for the next state election, which asks the state's voters to earmark funds to support library improvements.

Why Do It?

Rhode Island libraries need a source of funding to launch the LORI initiative and to keep current with databases and other information sources that will continually enhance its value to users. While there is value in mounting legislative campaigns on an annual basis, the results of these efforts create incremental growth in funding for libraries and don't provide the large sums of money needed to undertake a significant statewide project. Other states have been successful in using alternate approaches. For example, Georgia's GALILEO initiative is primarily funded with lottery proceeds. A recent poll conducted in New York State indicates that more than 70% of the public supports libraries and believes that they should receive more financial support. A direct appeal for start-up funding for the Library of Rhode Island (LORI) to the state's voters will not only provide needed funding but will educate the public about the value of this service. Another option to consider in a statewide referendum is the potential for creating an ongoing revenue stream to support libraries by requesting a portion of the State's proceeds from lottery revenues, penal fines, etc.

How to Do It

Investigate options for obtaining support for LORI and other statewide initiatives requiring a large infusion of start-up and continued funding. Planners will need to determine how to develop a public question, the timing for getting it on the ballot and the type of support needed to ensure its passage.

SECTION THREE: INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation Eight:

Enable Rhode Islanders to obtain needed materials by increasing delivery services to meet demands for sharing of library resources, with the state paying 100% of the cost of this service.

Why Do It?

As LORI develops, users will have increased capabilities for requesting and reserving library materials. Additional libraries that will become part of the network will require additional delivery service. The RILINK project, which is building a resource sharing structure among school libraries, will result in immediate needs for increased delivery among schools.

How to Do It

Monitor current delivery schedules, including the number of items delivered and requested among the state's libraries. Request an increase in the current delivery budget as part of the annual OLIS budget process.

Recommendation Nine:

Reconstitute RHILINET and incorporate its operations into LORI.

Why Do It?

Many of the operations currently provided by RHILINET -- consulting, telecommunications and technology support, access to bibliographic holdings -- fit well as LORI services. The nature of resource sharing and cooperation will change in an electronic and virtual library environment resulting in less need for a separate RHILINET function. RHILINET staff can be reassigned to the LORI initiative, taking care of the technical aspects of constructing the electronic library as well as creating content for the site.

How to Do It

Reassign RHILINET staff and funding to support LORI.

Revise RIGL 29-6-9 Rhode Island Library Network

A change to this legislation is proposed to reflect changes in technology, including online access to information, establish the OLIS plan adopted by the Library Board of Rhode Island as a determinant for state and federal support for basic RHILINET services, and to remove language related to the year 2000.

Recommendation Ten:

Provide funding for continued access to the specialized collections and services at the Providence Public Library.

Why Do It?

The Providence Public Library is, and remains, the largest public library in Rhode Island. In this role it provides back-up reference services to support local libraries and on-site reference for library users. For several years, there has been ongoing debate about the role of the Providence Public Library with regard to statewide reference, particularly as it relates to the level of state funding to support this service. This debate is likely to continue until LORI and other new initiatives are fully developed and the impact on the statewide reference center can be assessed. It is anticipated that statewide reference and information services will change with the development of LORI, taking some of the pressure off the Providence Public Library to supply back-up reference.

The State of Rhode Island needs to recognize the contribution of the historic and current resources of the Providence Public Library by providing per-capita funding to support continued access to these collections. The Providence Public Library should also serve as the public library of last recourse. In the future, the State may elect to provide per capita support to other libraries that provide access to unique collections.

This recommendation recognizes that the nature of reference and information services is changing and is likely to continue changing for the foreseeable future with people relying less on a single library to satisfy their information needs. We anticipate greater reliance on a distributed in-person and electronic information network. By designating Providence as the state's public library of last recourse, the state recognizes that although other libraries, particularly academic libraries, may have more resources, it is difficult for those institutions to provide full access. Providing funding to the Providence Public Library to serve as the library of last recourse will permit the library to utilize these funds in the most needed areas as opposed to tying them directly to reference services provided to the public.

How to Do It

Provide a \$1 per capita grant, based on the state's population, to the Providence Public Library to provide access to specialized and unique collections.

Revise RIGL 29-6-9 Rhode Island Library Network

Remove the designation of the statewide reference resource center at the Providence Public Library; funding for these resources can be provided under section 29-6-9 (a) (4).

Recommendation Eleven:

Revise and adopt standards for school and public libraries.

Why Do It?

The standards for the state's public libraries were last revised in 1983 and for school libraries in 1963 with some standards not taking effect until 1967. Librarians find standards to be useful in convincing local officials about the need to upgrade and expand service in order to meet an agreed-upon standard of service.

How to Do It

School library standards have been revised and are in the process of being reviewed. The Library Board of Rhode Island and RIEMA should work together to ensure their adoption. Public Library standards should be revised by the year 2000, with RILA and the Library Board of Rhode Island spearheading the approval process. The adoption of public library standards that delineate higher expectations for funding of public libraries should assist many in the public library community to convince local officials about the need for additional resources.

**SECTION FOUR: GOVERNANCE/POLICY
SETTING AND PLANNING**

Recommendation Twelve:

Provide the resources that will enable the Office of Library and Information Services and Library Board of Rhode Island to implement the recommendations in this study.

Why Do It?

Rhode Islanders need a strong voice to articulate their library and information needs to state government and to assist in the development of state policy with regard to libraries. While the creation of OLIS can be seen as a victory after efforts to dismantle the Department of State Library Services, the expanded responsibilities of this Office inhibit OLIS' ability to provide services needed by the library community. Library Programs within OLIS has not been able to add any new staff and has been forced to reassign staff who were formerly assigned only library responsibilities to address information issues. Rhode Island libraries need assistance in developing the technological and programmatic infrastructure that will allow them to provide 21st century library service. In order to accomplish Recommendations 1 through 11, OLIS should obtain additional staff and

resources that will permit it to function as a true coordinating agency for the state's libraries.

Feedback from the focus group discussions indicates that some members of the library community would like the Library Board of Rhode Island membership expanded to include greater representation from the state's public libraries. Membership may also need to be increased to reflect the newly emerging LORI and other interest groups. The Rhode Island library community would like the Library Board to function as the key advocacy group for library interests with state government.

How to Do It

Provide significant and sufficient additional staffing in OLIS to ensure that this state agency can accomplish the following:

- provide leadership for public library development, statewide planning, the development of the LORI virtual library
- establish collaborative relationships with other state agencies
- serve as an advocate for the state's library interests
- administer state grant programs
- provide technical support for LORI
- function as a liaison to the state's political leadership
- coordinate staff training and development.

Examine the current membership of the Library Board of Rhode Island to determine if all interests are represented. Increase membership and redefine the role of the Board with regard to advocacy and promotion of library initiatives.