

The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services

In 1964, the Department of State Library Services was established by law as the agency of state government charged with overseeing library development and cooperation in the State. The Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) replaced this agency in 1996, making this function part of the Rhode Island Department of Administration. The provision of library services within OLIS is governed by the 17-member Library Board of Rhode Island, a widely representative body which approves the policies, plans, fiscal programs, and services provided to libraries. The duties and responsibilities of OLIS are outlined in state law (RI General Laws 29-3.1-7) and include: (1) development of a systematic program of public library development and interlibrary cooperation; (2) preparation of a total budget for state aid to libraries; (3) creation of an annual program for the use of Federal funds; (4) development of standards and regulations for public library development; (5) cooperation with the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education in the development of effective school library media services and their integration into statewide library networking activities; (6) cooperation with the Commissioner of Higher Education in supporting and encouraging effective library services throughout the state system of higher education; and, (7) coordination of library services to state government.

The OLIS Mission Statement:

The state library agency of Rhode Island supports and strengthens library services by planning, by coordinating, by providing consultation services, training, and funding, and by promoting collaboration among libraries to ensure that all residents will benefit from free, open, convenient, and timely access to excellent library and information resources and services

How OLIS Supports Public Library Services

- Disburses state and federal funding to public libraries
- Provides consulting services to public libraries and branches
- Sponsors and conducts continuing education programs for librarians and **trustees**
- Serves as the public library for the blind and physically handicapped, serving 2,000 users statewide with talking books, magazines, and equipment provided by the Library of Congress
- Provides support services for libraries including reading development activities such as the Summer Reading Program and the Young Adult Round Table
- Oversees and supports library service in state institutions
- Administers a program providing up to 50% of the costs for public library construction projects, using state and federal funds
- Maintains a Professional Collection of library science materials, designed to meet the reference and information needs of librarians, trustees, library school students, and friends of libraries

How OLIS Supports Library Networking

- Administers the LORI, the state network of over 220 academic, public, school, special, and institutional, libraries statewide
- Maintains and develops the www.olis.ri.gov website, the major electronic information and communication resource for the RI library community
- Maintains and funds the delivery system that serves as the backbone of the state network, LORI
- Funds LORI services, including a major grant to the Providence Public Library as the Statewide Reference Resource Center

OLIS Publications of Interest to Librarians and Trustees*

Minimum Standards for Rhode Island Public Libraries (2000)

Comparable Statistics of Rhode Island Public Libraries (annual)

OLIS Five-Year Plan

Standards for LORI Member Libraries

How to Apply for Public Library Construction/Renovation Funding...

* For a complete list see the OLIS web site at: www.olis.ri.gov

The Office of Library and Information Services is located at One Capitol Hill, Providence RI 02908 and can be reached by telephone at 222-2726 or fax at 222-4195. The OLIS staff directory is located at <http://www.olis.ri.gov/aboutus/staff.php>

The Library of Rhode Island

The Library of Rhode Island is a virtual library, the sum total of the immense diversity and depth represented by the collections and skills embodied in the nearly 600 libraries of Rhode Island. This virtual library is not a structure, not a single building, or a single library collection, not even a single administration, but an infrastructure that interconnects the collections, staff, and missions of the state's libraries. Services are supported on a cooperative basis by local, state, federal government, and community agencies and organizations. Libraries in Rhode Island receive appropriate levels of funding so that residents can make optimum use of the many informational and cultural resources available in their collections or through electronic gateways. All types of libraries work together to share their expertise and their resources for the benefit of all the people of Rhode Island.

Citizens of Rhode Island can find materials and information on any subject, rapidly, from convenient locations, on demand. Library users are assisted by librarians and expert staff, who tailor resources and services to meet individual needs, and help people to locate books, materials, and information that nourish personal and economic growth. Through the virtual library, Rhode Islanders have access to a wide variety of library resources in many formats. Foreign language materials, literacy and English-as-a-Second-Language learning and teaching materials, talking books, Braille and large print for the visually impaired, and professional assistance in the use of the materials is available from any library location. Each library user has access to the programs and services s/he needs.

Computers and telecommunications technology are one part of the virtual library infrastructure; interlibrary loan, delivery and telefacsimile services and other cooperative efforts are also vital. Technology makes it possible for each library to be a door to the worldwide virtual library. With the help of a trained librarian, users can locate the resources they seek, or enter the virtual library using their personal computer at home or at work. The virtual library itself is also a door to libraries in the rest of the world, as well as to the Internet and the World Wide Web. Through the virtual library, users have access to books and other materials, online databases, web pages, and other information, which can be delivered in hard copy or electronic form.

State government has primary responsibility for providing the infrastructure for this virtual library, while individual communities, academic institutions, schools, and other organizations are responsible for tailoring their local resources and facilities to local needs and institutional missions. Sufficient staff are available at the state level with the expertise to maintain the infrastructure for both electronic and physical delivery of materials and information, ensure access to information and library resources, increase public awareness of these resources, provide referral service, and maintain quality control. Local libraries have incentives to participate in the virtual library and assistance in maintaining high-quality facilities and services. Through the Office of Library and Information Services, other State agencies are well informed about the needs, capabilities, services, resources, and complexities of all types of libraries throughout Rhode Island.

LORI: The State Library Network

Statewide Networks

The American Library Association's *Standards for Library Functions at the State Level* defines a network as "a combination of diverse information sources linked in a formal relationship." These standards assign specific networking responsibilities to the state library agency, including:

- to promote the concept of networking to make optimum use of total library and information resources within the state and plan for participation in the evolving national information system
- to effect exchange of information and materials through networks that open new sources and channels for the flow of information
- to ensure that the networks of library and information sources within a state's own borders transcend state boundaries and are linked to other networks state, regional, national, and international
- to encourage, by grants and other funding, the development and continuation of networks

LORI Established in Law

The General Assembly established the Rhode Island Library Network (later renamed LORI) in 1989. The legislature recognized the need for multitype library networking as envisioned in *Standards for Library Functions at the State Level* and detailed in the *Rhode Island Library Study*, a strategic plan for library services done in 1988 by the Department of State Library Services and the Rhode Island Library Association in consultation with Peat Marwick Main and Co. The legislative intent in creating the Network was "to provide each individual in Rhode Island with equal opportunity of access to resources that will satisfy their and society's information needs and interests." The law authorizes the Office of Library and Information Services to tie together all of the state's libraries, regardless of type or primary clientele, through a coherent system of communications and delivery that will make the resources of each library available to the users of all libraries.

RI General Law 29-6-9 requires the Office of Library and Information Services to include as part of its annual budget proposal funding "for the administration and operation of the LORI to:

- (1) provide central support services for LORI, such as delivery of materials, telecommunications, consultant services, and access to bibliographic and other Information sources;
- (2) reimburse libraries for the actual cost of providing services to individuals outside the library's primary clientele;

support the development, maintenance of and access to the resource sharing potential embodied in specialized collections and services at the Providence Public Library and other libraries which can be provided most cost-effectively on a statewide basis."

LORI also provides the means for librarians to communicate electronically. Staff at LORI libraries can use the online system, LORI, to answer a request for a library user, send interlibrary messages, conduct and participate in meetings, interact with colleagues on a statewide library "bulletin board," access the Internet, and complete their annual reports, surveys, and other documentation.

In order for the network to provide these services, the Office of Library and Information Services provides central support for LORI member libraries, including:

- access to bibliographic utilities for interlibrary loan (transaction costs, telecommunications, annual fees, start-up costs, equipment)
- statewide database of monograph and serial holdings
- planning and implementation of a statewide telecommunications network
- access to specialized databases
- statewide delivery of materials
- consultant services, information and referral, and training

Future plans include leadership and financial support by the Office of Library and Information Services for cooperative collection development and preservation activities.

The LORI Committee, advisory to OLIS, developed a set of standards that each library must meet as a participant in the statewide network. Any institution that complies with the *Standards for LORI Member Libraries* and is a signatory to the *LORI Interlibrary Loan Code* is considered a LORI member.

Friends of the Library

Friends of the Library are groups of citizens who join together to support, improve, and promote libraries. They understand the importance of library service to the community and work in a variety of ways to help provide quality service and to stimulate the use of the library.

Friends have no personal vested interest in the library and are in the unique position of being able to make enormous contributions in several areas: fund raising, services, public relations, advocacy, volunteerism, and community involvement. Their activities change as needs change. Friends usually select a limited number of activities to emphasize.

The roles of trustees, library director, and Friends are related but distinct. Trustees represent citizen control and governance of the library. The library director represents the administration and management of the library. Friends of the Library represent citizen participation and assistance to the library. It is important to the success of the total library program that all three understand clearly their respective roles and work together toward common goals.

Working with Friends

Trustees should assist the Friends organization and support its activities by providing leadership in the following ways:

- Develop a policy on Friends
- Become a member and attend Friends' special events
- Appoint a liaison with the Friends
- Ask for input from the Friends
- Express appreciation to Friends for their support and service

A good relationship between the library director and the Friends group is essential in fostering a climate for joint accomplishments. They must have a basic understanding of each other's goals and objectives, a recognition of the strengths that each brings to a common purpose, and the realization that through cooperation they can achieve ultimate success.

What do Friends do?

The purposes of organizing a Friends group are varied. Friends are usually organized with one or more of the following objectives:

- To increase community awareness and use of the library
- To work for library legislation or appropriations
- To encourage gifts, endowments, and memorials for the library
- To provide direct financial assistance

- To raise money and campaign for new building, renovation, or expansion projects
- To sponsor programs designed to add to the cultural life of the community
- To volunteer to work on specific library projects designated by the director

Friends can be most effective by:

- Adopting bylaws, including a clear statement of the Friends' roles
- Keeping informed of library plans and policies
- Planning their activities with the approval of the library director
- Carrying out projects without excessive demands on the library staff

Need help in organizing or revitalizing a Friends group?

The Office of Library and Information Services can provide assistance in getting a Friends group organized and in maintaining an active program. Books, videotapes, audiotapes, lists of other Friends groups, and a variety of brochures and newsletters are available for loan from the OLIS Professional Collection.

Does your library have a Friends group?

Does the board have a policy on the Friends group?

Volunteers in the Library

Volunteers constitute an important community resource for many public libraries. When a program is developed, it should be with the understanding that the use of qualified volunteers in a library program is a supplement to, not a substitute for, paid staff.

Volunteers usually come to the library on an individual basis and participate in on-going work or special projects within the library setting. Their tasks should be of genuine significance and should enhance the services and capabilities of the library. Volunteers can be advocates for the library within the community.

Libraries should not undertake a volunteer program unless the library board and the director are committed to the concept and are willing to devote the necessary time to develop a program that is well managed and will benefit the library.

Successful volunteer programs are:

- Planned and approved by the staff and board
- Based on written policy
- Managed under sound personnel practices (interviewing, training, evaluation, and development are important to volunteers)
- Clear about job descriptions, the status of the volunteer, supervision, expectations as to work schedule, and consistent service
- Clear about policies concerning insurance, use of library vehicles, and paid expenses
- Aware of the need to recognize and show appreciation for volunteer work
- Realistic in expectations of hours donated, types of work to be done, and training required
- Open to the community, in an effort to use the skills and talents of people who can contribute to the enhancement of library service

Has the board adopted a policy for volunteers?

Are there procedures in place for managing the volunteer program?

Organizations Serving Trustees

Continuing education and networking are essential components of effective trusteeship. The following organizations provide such opportunities for their members.

American Library Association (ALA) (www.ala.org)

The American Library Association is the oldest and largest library association in the world. Its membership of more than fifty-five thousand includes librarians, **trustees**, other interested people, and institutions.

The purpose of the association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. Major areas of concern include access to information, legislation and funding, intellectual freedom, public awareness, personnel resources, and library services, development, and technology. The association publishes a monthly journal for members, *American Libraries*, and has two major conferences a year (Midwinter and Annual).

Association of Library Trustees & Advocates (ALTA) (<http://www.ala.org/ala/alta/alta.htm>)

The Association of Library Trustees and Advocates is the division of ALA that is primarily concerned with the interests of **trusteeship**. Membership benefits include: the means to connect with libraries of all sizes in all parts of the country; advisory services from the professional headquarters staff; ALTA's newsletter subscription; the opportunity to serve on one of the ALTA committees of special interest to trustees; information on publications relating to library trusteeship; and discounts on ALTA publications.

ALA Washington (DC) Office (<http://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/washingtonoffice.htm>)

The American Library Association has an office in Washington that serves as a liaison between the membership of ALA and the federal government. The staff monitors actions of the federal government that affect libraries and disseminates this information to the membership. The staff also supplies information on libraries to Congress and government agencies, and works for legislation affecting library programs.

Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA) (www.folusa.com)

FOLUSA is a national organization that works to develop and support local and state Friends of Library groups throughout the country. The organization meets twice a year in conjunction with the American Library Association. Meetings offer opportunities to meet peers from other states, to engage in problem solving, and to share successes. FOLUSA's website offers a number of valuable online publications, especially fact sheets relating to all topics of interest to library friends.

Rhode Island Library Association (RILA) (www.uri.edu/library/rila/rila.html)

RILA is a professional and educational organization of librarians, library staff, **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. Membership is open to everyone. For more information contact the Reference Department of the Office of Library and Information Services (222-5768) or visit the RILA web site.

Rhode Island Coalition of Library Advocates (COLA)

<http://www.bodees.com/COLA/COLA.htm>

COLA is a statewide nonprofit grassroots organization that seeks to improve the quality of life of all Rhode Islanders by supporting libraries of all kinds. COLA works to help improve library service through advocacy, education, public awareness, and encouragement of local library support groups.