

**Special Legislative Commission to Study the Strengths and Weaknesses
of Library Services in the State of Rhode Island**

Now called:

THE KARLA HARRY COMMISSION

August 16, 2007

Room 135 – State House

Members Present: Howard Boksenbaum, E. Gale Eaton, Karen Quinn, Tom Evans, Pat Redfearn, Phyllis Humphrey, Janet Levesque, Mary Ann Slocomb, Ruth Sullivan, Representative Peter Lewiss, Chairman.

Invited Guests: Bob Aspri, Beth Perry, David Macksam.

Commission was called to order on Thursday, August 16, 2007 at 9:35 a.m. in Room 135 State House, by Chairman Peter Lewiss.

LEGISLATION

The chairman reported on the two pieces of legislation passed by the General Assembly this year:

1. *Extension of the Commission and renaming it the Karla Harry Library Commission.* We will look at once more extending the life of this Commission through 2009 because under this legislation (passed in 2007). An official report is due in April 2008, but there's much more work that has to be accomplished.. Three areas have been focused on since December.
2. Second piece of legislation that passed was in regard to *language changes in the LORI network section of RIGL giving authority for database purchase "subject to appropriation"*. It is hoped that the Governor will include it in his budget through OLIS.

Rep. Lewiss was thanked heartily by the commission members for all his hard work.

Rep. Lewiss expressed his thanks and said that when you have diversity or representation in support of legislation, it's so empowering for the committee to hear from constituents. It gave the people of the State and legislators a real sense of value of what this could provide.

ACTION ITEM: Howard Boksenbaum will see if funds for databases can be included in the next budget.

CURRENT LAW

Janet – At the organizing meeting in November to start a library commission, a facilitator's services were retained to help identify issues David Macksam passed out copies to everyone (Meeting Notes from the Library Commission Organizational Meeting of 11-17-06. See attachment.). There's a real need to look at library services every 10

years to make sure that we're heading in the direction to meet the needs of the citizens of Rhode Island. Need to remain viable and fully organized.

Rep. Lewiss asked if anyone spent any time looking at (from the Library Commission Organizational Meeting Notes of 12-06). Background Information/Documents – current law? Discussion ensued regarding language changes, what LibFutures and the SurfRI sub-committee want to see and funding.

Rep. Lewiss – Sees two things – our ask is for \$1.6m, if we could get \$400-800,000, what does that mean? That's an important negotiation tool in May or June.

Karen – It didn't say in the Bill that it would fund \$1.6m.

Rep. Lewiss – It would have to be a specific appropriation in the budget as opposed to legislation that's just the authority. Funding needs to be in the Governor's budget.

Howard – We have an "A" plan. Still need to put infrastructure in place. Library community has to get itself organized around this. Wondering if starting where we did last year and raise awareness again.

ACTION ITEM: LibFutures Steering Committee may want to look at changes to language and maybe other changes in current law.

BOND ISSUE

Bob Aspri asked if it was possible to focus on a bond issue. In Maine they put together one catalog and databases and created a bond issue to let the people decide. The SurfRI website is still available and he could get it going again. The Commission could make a big push to the media to show website. In Maine, they used bond issue money to continue databases and, in the meantime, pushed legislature to fund it so it could continue. The legislators found money to continue to fund those databases.

Discussion ensued regarding the viability of a bond issue. It was suggested that a meeting be scheduled to discuss Maine's actions and see if any helpful points for RI would be forthcoming. Unreserved support from every member of the Commission and libraries would be needed in order to "sell" a bond issue to the public. It was suggested that a conference call with the person responsible for organizing the bond issue in Maine be initiated.

There was discussion about looking at foundation money to expand the statewide databases once the initiative is started. There is a need to institutionalize the idea that RI needs statewide databases. There was some support for the bond issue being the only hope and then going to private foundations.

It was mentioned that it is unlikely that the Champlin Foundations would give money for this based on letters received by libraries that they already give libraries too much. An endowed database fund was suggested. Alan Shawn Feinstein was suggested as a source for support. If it requires matching funds, there is already funding through libraries supporting databases which should qualify as matching funds.

ACTION ITEM: Howard will pursue both what we can bring back to this group in terms of Maine experience and at the same time try the Alan Shawn Feinstein route. Produce legislation in January as needed.

REPORT OF COMMISSION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of G.A. staff or an intern (possibly by someone majoring in government or a library school student doing an independent study.

ACTION ITEM – Everyone will look to see who’s out there to do a report, i.e., student, intern, college student majoring in government.

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

The chairman asked that the Commission also identify relationships. There is a need to cultivate people such as librarians and library boards to find out who has relationships with people in power to achieve our goals. It was mentioned that in the past, RILA has been helpful. One strategy that has been effective is a Legislative Breakfast.

A breakfast in March to get legislators thinking about it during the session was suggested: Do 2-3 communities together – not individually. Have one library invite metropolitan people. A resource person should attend the breakfasts with a model agenda which the Commission would be responsible for drafting along with the local library and RILA. Commission members need to be there to help.

Other suggestions: locate patrons who would be willing to talk about how the databases helped them; Rep. Lewiss suggested that if something was hosted at URI, legislators would be more likely to attend; how many locations are needed?

ACTION ITEM – Local is the way to go. Group two to three communities together. A model agenda will be drafted by the Commission along with local libraries and RILA. A resource person will attend each breakfast. A standardized press release will be developed by Tom. Breakfasts will be held in March. Pat Redfearn will host breakfast for the East Bay area. Determine how many locations are needed.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Howard – A meeting was held with NELINET – as a result OLIS changed its status with NELINET to become a consortial sponsor and as a result, continuing education packages will be brought into the State. Advice from HELIN that often we get better prices on databases. **Ruth** – Spoke with people in Massachusetts and talked about possible delivery cooperation but nothing concrete.

PRIORITIES

The chairman asked what, beyond the three areas we have been focusing on, are the priorities that need to be addressed.

Howard announced that another project with NELINET is being contemplated by the six New England states. There will be a meeting at NELINET’s annual meeting in May. One of the big topics is how social networks are used in libraries.

Bob announced that HELIN got a grant of about \$240,000 for a digital repository. College professors and others are looking for places to digitize images, etc. It was done as a consortium – put together a committee, now there are about eight different depositories which allow faculty to deposit papers in. Able to search on Google. Can link from catalog to digital repository. Not a high profile for public libraries right now.

Howard noted that OLIS is funding a project for PPL to digitize their photo collection. Connecticut is our model for that. He agrees that a statewide digital repository is important.

Rep. Lewis noted that digitization seems appropriate for this Commission given current diversity and application. The purpose of this Commission is to get everybody on the same page. Access for everyone in the State, no matter where you are in the State.

Bob and Howard reported that in high schools and colleges they are requiring people to keep all materials in electronic format (electronic portfolios) and that Higher Education Assistance Authority is allowing portfolios on their own site. There is a need for preservation.

ACTION ITEMS

Chairman Lewiss appointed two more sub-committees, asking that a request go out to other members asking if they would be willing to serve:

1 – Digitization and Preservation –Tom Evans was nominated as Chair.

Pat and Karen agreed to serve on the committee.

2 – School Standards – Suzanne Costa was nominated as Chair.

Phyllis Humphrey agreed to serve on the committee.

Rep. Lewiss Asked all sub-committees to meet between now and the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2007 – 2P.M. OR 3 P.M.