

### Project Purpose:

In working toward a prominent objective of the state library agency's current LSTA 5-Year Plan; namely, to "Create a collective vision for libraries and museum services in Rhode Island," (Goal III, Objective B), OLIS staff has worked with and continues to collaborate with the statewide multitype library futures, or "LibFutures" committee. Two OLIS staff members are heavily involved with all of the committee's work, another two served on working group sub-committees throughout the year.

Following on a day-long conference in May of 2003, "Navigating the Future of Libraries: A Rhode Map" that was attended by library directors, staffs, and board members from all types of libraries (see FY2003 LSTA report,) a number of additional meetings were held to build consensus on goals and activities for statewide library development. The activities and outputs of these meetings are listed below:

No new legislation to benefit libraries' collaborative efforts had resulted from the extensive RI study published in 1999, *New Possibilities; RI Libraries for the Next Millennium*. It had therefore been decided in the summer of 2004 that this latest Futures effort would seek the establishment of a Legislative Commission to Study the Future of Libraries in RI, as a means of assuring legislative commitment during all of the stages of planning.

### Project Activities/Methods

- 1) The first meeting to be held in Federal FY2005 was designated as a Town Meeting, and was held in December 2004 at the conference center at Bryant University. There, approximately 100 members of the library community, including directors, staff librarians, trustees, and library friends, worked with a nationally-recognized facilitator to reach consensus on three key service goals. See Output (1) below.
- 2) The Town Meeting Planning Committee recommended the establishment of work groups for these three areas. Each work group was charged to develop an action plan for implementation of each of the three service goals with consideration of appropriate legislative recommendations to the library study commission. See Output (2) below.
- 3) An additional discussion group with the facilitator was held during ALA Midwinter in Boston in January 2005, with members of the LibFutures Committee and other interested members of the library community, to clarify specific steps that should be taken to assure progress toward the three service goals. Participants at this discussion urged special meetings to tackle the "barrier" issues in contemplating RI library futures; namely, new parameters for statewide roles of the largest public library in the state and the state library agency, as well as the status of school libraries in Rhode Island. See Output (3) below.
- 4) As a result of encouragement by the library community, legislative supporters introduced bills to establish a Legislative Commission in both Houses in the 2005 session of the RI General Assembly. The LibFutures Committee met several times to reach consensus on its appointees to the commission. The success of the legislation seemed to be assured. Unfortunately, along with scores of other well-intentioned legislation, it

faltered under the impact of Separation of Powers legislation also approved in the 2005 session because it included gubernatorial appointments that were in conflict with that new legislation. See Output (4) below. Whether the Legislative Commission concept will be re-examined in the next legislative session remains an open question.

5) Specific activities that will be employed to pursue financing of the recommendations from the work groups reports remain, as yet, open for debate. Possibilities include a statewide bond referendum, budget legislation, or a combination of the two methods.

#### Project Outputs\*:

(1) Participants in the Town Meeting reached consensus on three key service goals for development of RI libraries, all with equal priority: a) “one catalog for all” b) statewide databases and c) lifelong learning.

(2) The three work groups met over several months, and generated reports in each area.

<http://library.rwu.edu/libraryfutures/OneCatalogReportNov05.pdf>

<http://library.rwu.edu/libraryfutures/DBWGReport.pdf>

<http://library.rwu.edu/libraryfutures/LifelongLearning.doc>

(3) Reports of the “barrier issue” meetings were generated for the library community.

(Where are these? – I probably have them on my H drive, but I thought they were on the Futures site!)

(4) The Legislative Commission bill may be found at

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/PublicLaws/law04/res04/res04306.htm>

The LibFutures Committee-designated members of the Commission may be found at

<http://library.rwu.edu/libraryfutures/legislativemembers.html>

#### Project Outcomes\*:

The library community of Rhode Island has become more familiar with each other across the boundaries of library type, and is working together toward common goals. The Coalition of Library Advocates, a grass-roots library support group that seeks to improve the quality of life for Rhode Islanders by supporting RI libraries of all kinds, is poised to support library futures efforts through advocacy, education, and public awareness activities.

#### Exemplary Reason