

LibFutures Town Meeting
George E. Bello Center, Bryant University
3-5 p.m. January 10, 2006

The LibFutures Committee, chaired by David Macksam, held a Town Meeting at the conclusion of the HELIN Annual Conference to provide the opportunity to keep the library community informed about what had transpired since the last Town Meeting in December of 2004; and to discuss the working group reports, the status of the proposed Legislative Commission, related issues, and what to do next. Approximately 80 librarians, staff members and library supporters attended.

A summary of LibFutures meetings and activities was given. The following individuals gave summaries of the working groups reports: Hope Houston for Statewide Databases; Kathleen Boyd for One Catalog; and Eileen Socha for Lifelong Learning. All reports from the working groups are available on the LibFutures website. It is anticipated that these reports will be submitted to the commission if/when it is established.

Comments from David Macksam:

Currently, there is no Commission. There were difficulties in gaining action from both Houses to establish one. The LibFutures Steering Committee believes a commission is needed to keep legislators informed, to facilitate programs, and to provide assistance with legislation to implement the programs.

Selected members from the LibFutures Committee will be talking to Representative Betsy Dennigan and Senator Elizabeth Roberts for advice, both broadly and narrowly, on how to handle the situation politically regarding establishing a commission and about the possibilities of a bond referendum and/or budget legislation . Topics to discuss with them include:

1. Funding.
 - a. Bond issue in 2006 or 2008
 - b. Budget bills
 - c. A demonstration grant for each piece to show need, and then move forward for funding
 - d. A combined package. If a bond referendum is deemed the best way to proceed, the amount would be in the \$15-20 million dollar range. This could cover costs for 5 years, though the figures have not been fully worked out. Additional funding would be needed after 5 years.
2. Moving beyond the Separation of Powers complications to establish a commission to study the future of libraries in RI. .

There is a great deal of input on these issues, and the results of the meeting will be reported. The LibFutures website will be a source for information.

Comments:

Mark McKenney, Chair of the Library Board of RI, spoke and urged the library community not to rush to meet 2006 deadlines but to work quickly toward the LibFutures goals as 2008 is

coming fast. Additionally, he urged continuing to work toward establishment of a Legislative Commission.

The following comments are not attributed to individual participants, as they were made generally by attendees, most of whom were not individually identified:

- We need to simplify our message to make it understandable by legislators and the general public. The fact that one half of R.I. citizens have a library card is an important one to remember. We need to reach them and use them to help in our cause.
- CLAN, HELIN, RILINK and individual libraries provide databases for their users only. The intent would be to get databases that can be used by all RI libraries and residents.
- Access to databases in CLAN libraries now is only from the library computers or from CLAN cardholders at home. These are not available to schools or anyone else.
- Some college students are not RI residents, don't have CLAN cards, so cannot use CLAN databases.
- We should not be quibbling over databases, but go to legislative actions and move forward. Don't focus on details now. Ask legislators for advice on getting legislation and the commission going.
- It is too bad that there was such low support for issues and a low response rate for the databases survey from the library community. We need to talk to among ourselves to get 70%-80% of the library community in support of our goals. The legislature won't care about our goals if we don't show united support among ourselves.
- We need to think about our priorities to make them stronger. Then as a package there would be something in there for all.
- A Legislative Commission is needed to get us going and support our programs to provide a focus for the General Assembly.
- Currently there is no economy of scale. If we did our programs on a statewide basis we'd save monies, which we don't do right now.
- We need a commission to handle multi-year programs to ensure they are established and funded.
- Does delivery system need to expand? If so, how will it be funded? Deliver to school districts? Deliver by town?
- Costs are not fully defined for the 5-year span.
- Network licenses versus statewide licenses need economy of scale (cost vs. variance).

- Since all CLAN libraries have databases, then, in effect, is there statewide access?
- Vendors restrict access through licensing agreements.
- Licenses are designed by vendors to make access by non-licensed libraries, including schools even if the student is using a CLAN card, contrary to contractual agreements.'
- Low response to database survey – does this point to ongoing barrier issues?
- Focus on advantages of doing this; strength of collectivity/collaboration. Need to continue to talk about “low participation” from library community.
- Concern about how to manage capital expenditures versus ongoing operating expenses.
- Public libraries are taking steps toward one catalog (migration to Innovative), and are adding databases.
- Legislators need to see a united front – how can we get legislators to see these all as statewide issues?
- School librarians need to get to their legislators.
- COLA (RI Coalition of Library Advocates) is 100% in support.
- Governor’s Task Force on literacy. (?)
- Talking Points – We need these to advocate for libraries.
 - Simplify what we are talking about.
 - a) Describe what databases are, in terms a lay person will understand.
 - b) (What is) One Catalog?
 - c) (What is) Lifelong Learning?
- Make public aware of what’s available.
- Tie in with economic development in RI. Tell stories that work for business development. Businesses grow with information.
- Use a 5-year strategic plan to develop a strategy for this. Timeline: 2007/2008– we will be working all along.
- Technology changes rapidly.
- What are we asking for – how will the 3 issues interplay? Do we push this forward piecemeal or as one package?

- LibFutures Steering Committee is looking for input on strategy.
- Do we pick one piece of the program and move now, or wait another year to strategize?
- We worked for multi-type initiatives, if we pick one, we'll get dissension. (We should pick one) only if legislators say pick this one.
- Decide about the priorities by using nominal technique?
- Need a name for the vision/initiative.
- Pick a database. If funding is one year, then it gets it going on a test basis.
- One Catalog means more delivery, etc.
- The issues of Lifelong Learning are not concrete enough to garner support in a specific amount.
- Let CLAN/HELIN cooperation happen in March 2006. They will both use Innovative but will still be two catalogs; need another step to get to One Catalog for CLAN/HELIN.

In summary, the LibFutures Committee needs to work on talking points now that the working groups have reported and given the opportunity for questions and answers on their findings. We must clarify our mission, and the benefits to all libraries and users for statewide implementation. We need to identify the type of funding to be found for the programs.