Investing in Our Communities In Rhode Island

An Evaluation Of Rhode Island's Five-Year LSTA Plan FY1998-2002

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Institute of Museum and Library Services

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Executive Summary

LSTA funds have been used in Rhode Island to leverage and share scarce resources for the benefit of most segments of the state's 1,048,039 residents. The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) has implemented and achieved most of its LSTA Five-Year Plan using a decentralized[1] project management approach geared toward providing resources and access to technology and information sources to all libraries and residents in the state. Barbara Weaver, the Chief Information Officer of OLIS, led a dedicated team of professionals in implementing this strategy. The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services has enabled Rhode Island public, school, special and academic libraries to participate in 21st century information resources and has worked diligently to remove barriers to underserved populations and people with difficulty using libraries.

The Office of Library and Information Services has effectively led a process which provides services to residents that would cost their communities many millions of dollars. The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI) has saved communities over $250,000 in labor alone, by training and using hundreds of volunteer tutors in its programs; funds which can be used for other critical services. In many of the communities associated with the seven participating libraries in the RIFLI project, the project would not be available or affordable without LSTA support.

Very simply, without LSTA support, libraries in Rhode Island would be less able to provide needed services to residents today. Comments from residents and librarians indicate a renewed sense of outreach and community in many Rhode Island libraries. This has resulted from the implementation of the LSTA Five-Year plan and LSTA funds to support the plan. This sense of vitality and relevance is crucial to libraries remaining an important social asset in Rhode Island communities. A sense of place, of community, is important in the cities and towns of Rhode Island where older communities have been slow to renew and reinvest while thousands of new immigrants find Rhode Island every year and are determined to become active, prosperous residents.

Similarly, the amount of staff development, training, continuing education, and technical training, which is provided by OLIS with LSTA support, is a major investment in the human capital that delivers services and materials in each community and statewide.

LSTA funds have also been provided through smaller competitive LSTA grants to local libraries and schools that enabled them to participate in resource sharing projects, to establish linkages among libraries, or to convert and catalog records of special collections. Without this assistance these libraries would have been unable to participate

[1] In projects requiring significant outreach and local coordination, on site project coordinators have been empowered (with OLIS direction and assistance) to achieve results, specifically in RILINK, RIFLI, and Homework Helpers.

in broader resource sharing and the variety and quantity of resources available to individual library users would have been diminished.

Some of the projects discussed in the following report include:

- A popular and effective Family Literacy Program that provides a model for implementation and reporting.
- Development and support of RILINK, a shared online catalog and network of K-12 libraries, that enables school libraries to participate more fully in resource sharing with other school libraries and other types of libraries within the LORI network.
- A statewide library delivery service that accommodates over 147 libraries throughout the state and receives praise from residents and librarians alike for its fast service.
- Access to a state government website called Find It! Rhode Island, which searches information on every state and local government website in the state.
- Professional training and development for library staff through workshops, classes, teleconferences, individual coaching and consulting when needed.
- Talking Books Plus Services, which receives high marks from participants throughout the state who are blind, visually impaired or physically disabled.

The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services has successfully worked toward its goals in the Five-Year Plan. In particular the Rhode Island Library Information Network for Kids, the Statewide Library Delivery Service, the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative, Mother Goose Asks "Why?" and OLIS and Library Programs' web pages are excellent models for targeting library and information services to people with limited functional literacy or information skills and underserved urban communities, implementing resource sharing of collections, and electronic access to information sources.

Who Benefits?

Although the full population of the state received improved and increased access to information and materials due to LSTA assisted projects, there are specific communities and populations of residents in Rhode Island that deserve special mention. Specific populations that have benefited from LSTA assisted projects include:

- New immigrants in older cities whose libraries host family literacy workshops, who now have access to the Internet, full text databases, state government information, and access to the collections of libraries throughout the state.

- Middle school and high school students who now have access in school and at home to a much larger collection of materials and access to a state government web site for researching information

- Many retirees and seniors who rely on their library as a comfortable hub of their community, where they can learn to e-mail relatives, search the Internet and have books delivered to them quickly from other libraries

- Blind, visually impaired and physically disabled people who rely on Talking Books or Large Print books as their lifeline to the world

- Librarians who receive much needed skills training, technology training, consultation and guidance, and a sense of community with other Rhode Island librarians

The following report will describe some of these programs and benefits.

"Sharing in Rhode Island is good for everyone. No one can own it all."
Paul Venancio, co-founder of RILINK

Overall report of results in achieving goals and objectives based on the Five-Year Plan.

The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) created a Five-Year Plan in 1997 to guide the use of LSTA funds. The plan was discussed and approved by the Library Board of Rhode Island on July 15, 1997. The plan covers the period from October 1, 1997 to September 30, 2002. An inclusive process to create the Five-Year Plan provided for the involvement of many in the Rhode Island library community. An important component of the planning process was to develop a discussion within the RI library community to create a relevant mission and focus that incorporates LSTA priorities and Rhode Islanders' most critical library and information needs. To accomplish this, many discussions, focus groups and meetings were held throughout the state in 2001 representing the views and comments from a number of organizations, including:

- The Coalition of Library Advocates – attendees in the meeting stressed the need for access to materials and services. Cooperative library efforts and shared staff expertise should be relied on to provide literacy training, sites for tutoring, and better access. Funding should address needs for increased hours, and services to a multicultural environment. Libraries should become more user-friendly, be physically accessible and help to bridge the 'digital divide.'

- The Children's Services Advisory Council – recommendations included support for reading readiness, reading promotion, literacy programs, state grants to local library operations, continuing education and the need to reach more children through partnerships with community agencies and adult care givers.

- A survey of statewide network LORI (formerly RHILINET) libraries. Their priorities included state grants to support local operations, network services including ILL and delivery, and technology training and support.

- A meeting of directors of large and medium size libraries recommended that public libraries and public library funding should be the top priority, that state agency staff costs be moved gradually to entirely state funds, that an ongoing evaluation of the five year plan take place and that the state agency should recognize and not duplicate the role of the public library network (CLAN – Cooperating Libraries Automated Network). A group of directors of small public libraries stressed support for children's services and training for technical assistants and trustees.

- The Rhode Island Educational Media Association (RIEMA) discussed the need for providing improved access to school and other library holdings for students and teachers and the ability to make requests online and have materials delivered.

- The Consortium of Rhode Island Academic and Research Libraries (CRIARL) stressed access to library holdings, with support for its union list of serials and delivery services.

- Recommendations from *Bricks and Mortar for the Mind: A Statewide Preservation Program for Rhode Island* and *Agenda for the Nineties,* the report from the Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services, were reviewed.

- A Literacy focus group was held with librarians involved with literacy and staff of other agencies that provide literacy services or referral. A second focus group discussed the services of the Statewide Reference Resource Center, which receives state funding via OLIS.

- The process of gathering comments and discerning library needs throughout the five years of the plan has continued

The mission, developed through this inclusive process was:

To provide leadership and support for the continued development of public libraries and the coordination of library and information services, so as to guarantee free and open access for all Rhode Islanders; and to meet the expanding cultural, informational, recreational, and research needs of our citizens through the combined resources of all our state's libraries, which together constitute the Library of Rhode Island.

The OLIS Library Program's Five-Year LSTA Plan established two major goals and six priorities and developed a decentralized project approach to fulfilling them. The goals and priorities included:

Goal: Libraries have the support they require to meet the needs of their users.
As determined by the Rhode Island library community, OLIS administration and staff, and the Library Board of Rhode Island, priorities for achieving this goal were:

- Grants to support local library operations/capital expenditures
- Statewide library network/coordination/interconnection of resources
- Technology training and support
- Help/advice on incorporating/planning for new technologies in libraries
- Continuing education (professional staff, LTAs, and/or trustees)
- Support for reading readiness and reading promotion programs in libraries
- Support for adult literacy programs in libraries
- Local library support – consulting, information, program support

- Library advocacy/leadership
- Grants to support special/new projects and programs
- Forecasting and projecting library futures
- Support for statewide preservation program

The following OLIS projects address this goal:

- Local Library Development
- Library of Rhode Island (LORI)

Results:

> *"I love the Summer Reading Program. Our library looks forward to it every year."* *Survey respondent*

The Summer Reading Program has been a very successful program serving more than 17,000 children from preschoolers to sixth graders. The Summer Reading Program is entering its 25th year with funding from a variety of sources. These have included McDonald's Restaurants of RI and RI children's book author Chris Van Allsburg and his wife Lisa, as well as volunteer assistance from the Rhode Island School of Design, Rhode Island READS, the Corporation for National Service and AmeriCorps*VISTA. Partnerships providing incentive materials include 13 organizations such as the Providence Children's Museum and the Roger Williams Park Zoo.

OLIS provides coordination for the program through planning meetings, finding a theme and providing publicity. OLIS provides materials such as posters, bookmarks, reading records, certificates and activity sheets. A variety of performers and artists are subsidized by OLIS to motivate repeat library visits and enhance program participation.

The program, which runs from 5 to 10 weeks, records the child's accomplishments and provides incentives and rewards for completion of reading requirements. The Summer Reading program in 2001 included an excellent art and poster component with a theme of "Camp Out with a Good Book."

Suggestions for expansion of the program include the idea to *"... fund a statewide YA summer reading program on a regular basis like the children's program. It would lend a measure of respect and inclusiveness to the middle/high-school-age readership."*

Over 70% of respondents to the evaluation survey report that the Summer Reading Program has been one of the most improved programs due to LSTA funding.

Grant funds and staff support for Library Literacy Programs include the very successful Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI). RIFLI has received approximately $65,000 in funding in each year of the LSTA grant cycle. See Results of In-Depth Evaluations in the next section of the report.

Continuing Education in Rhode Island for library staff and trustees is an organized, well-attended program of many subjects and interests. OLIS provides a full service feature on its web site to allow library staff information about the workshops and an online registration form. The workshops continue to be popular in Rhode Island and survey respondents note their quality and frequency as areas of satisfaction. Some of the continuing education workshops sponsored by OLIS include:

- Readers Advisory Workshop
- Young Adult Roundtable
- Children's Services;
  e.g., Working With Kids With Behavioral and Learning Challenges
- Planning For Results
- Telecommunications and Videoconferencing

Reference skills training has been effective in Rhode Island through a process involving almost 200 library staff in workshops designed to standardize and change existing reference behavior and techniques into more effective ones. Transform, a Maryland company, was contracted to provide effective reference training to Rhode Island library supervisors and other staff. A base line of effectiveness was determined through a pre-test to be fairly low in compliance and in producing the desired result. Through a series of workshops, role-playing and practice, the post-test results indicated a significant improvement in the effectiveness of the reference response. The use of a check sheet or probe for the library staff person and a feedback model in which the questioner is asked a few questions about their satisfaction with the results produced very favorable results and an increase in skills and effectiveness. The check sheet was subsequently duplicated and distributed by OLIS to all LORI libraries.

Additionally, as of FY2002 many software and PC related programs are now also offered and take place in the Computer Lab in the Providence Public Library, via the state-funded Statewide Reference and Resource Center grant.

The "Soaring to Excellence" workshops were also highly regarded by survey respondents and they asked to have similar workshops in the future. They stated that this type of development along with the skills training in subject areas and software and PC training provided a well-rounded approach to continuing education.

OLIS publicized additional workshops, courses and sessions available through NELINET, the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science and the Rhode Island Department of Administration's Office of Training and Development.

Consulting services, professional materials and information to libraries are provided through Local Library Development (LLD) and through the LORI Network Team and LORI website (www.lori.state.ri.us). Local Library Development supports local public library services in an effort to provide services to every Rhode Islander through their public library. Team members in LLD work with assigned library partners to provide

consultant and referral help when needed. Visits to the team member's assigned library are made at least once a year to discuss a number of topics relevant to local library service. The library's programs and services are discussed and the need for additional available resources is reviewed, with intent to assist the library in acquiring them. The LORI Network Team provides consultant services and technical assistance both onsite, through email, and through the LORI website.

The LORI website is an effective medium for providing relevant information that is beneficial to the entire Rhode Island library community. The LORI Pro subweb is a dedicated resource to address specific needs of library professionals and staff. The LORI website organizes and coordinates information and resources needed by library staff into easily accessible formats. It includes the Calendar of Events, continuing education information, delivery and ILL information, e-rate information, resource sharing, First Search and "Who To Call" information. Access is also provided to:

- Disaster and Preservation Planning for Libraries
- Selected Rhode Island State Laws relating to Libraries
- Lib-Web Cat
- Internet Public Library
- Librarians' Index to the Internet
- Special Interest Group discussion lists for Rhode Island libraries
- LORI email accounts

Statewide Library Delivery Service in Rhode Island delivers[2] materials to 147 libraries in LORI, up to 5 days a week. Deliveries are made among participating LORI libraries of all types. Libraries locate and request materials using the LORI online ILL forms, OCLC referral forms and links to and within the CLAN (the public library network), RILINK (the school library network) and HELIN (the academic library network) automated systems. Almost 500 delivery stops are made each week, Monday through Friday. Deliveries will be made in 2002 to approximately 71 public libraries, 18 academic libraries, 36 school libraries and 26 special libraries.

> *"The delivery service is a huge success; it is an amazing, amazing success story by getting materials into the hands of users very quickly."* *Survey respondent*

The delivery service is a very successful example of resource sharing in Rhode Island and continues to add additional libraries, especially school libraries, when funding permits. Unfortunately, budget restrictions prevent OLIS from allocating more than $100,000 of its state funding for delivery. OLIS continues to search for a state appropriation to allow continued expansion of the delivery service, especially to benefit Rhode Island schools, of which only 8% receive delivery service. Many school libraries in Rhode Island do not have the local funding to participate in the RILINK project but can still be LORI members and thereby benefit from the Delivery Service. The issue of closing the "digital divide" in Rhode Island is closely related to access to materials and electronic linkages among school and public libraries.

[2] As of January, 2001

Many library directors responding to the survey question asking, "How has LSTA funding helped you in meeting local needs for service," indicated that the Delivery Service was the primary benefit to their community.

> *"Delivery helps to get materials quickly from other libraries in RI. We couldn't provide ILL without delivery."*
>
> *"The Delivery Service and the Summer Reading program meet my community's needs the greatest."*
>
> *Delivery Service and ILL couldn't be done without LSTA funding. They are vital to my community."*
>
> *"LSTA funding has made RILINK viable, which in turn has greatly enhanced our ability to serve our users. The Delivery Service is a key component for RILINK to be successful."*
>
> *"The Delivery service needs to expand and find additional funding from the state and other sources."*

One hundred percent (100%) of the respondents to the evaluation survey rated the Statewide Delivery Service as a **high** or **very high** value to them and their library users.

LORI grants to libraries to meet LSTA priorities and ILL and other LORI resource sharing projects have included a number of projects receiving LSTA funding since 1998. These include Homework Helpers and RILINK, which are evaluated in the next section. Other projects that have received LSTA funding include cataloging, record conversion and digitization projects. Two of these include grants to the Redwood Library and Athenaeum and to the Providence Athenaeum. The Redwood Library and Athenaeum has received LSTA support in 1999, 2000 and 2001 to convert records to a machine-readable format so that they may be accessible through OCLC and the library's OPAC. More than 18,000 books in its circulating adult biography collection are rare 19th and early 20th century biographies. The project has allowed the Redwood, the oldest lending library in America, to convert over 6,000 catalog records so far to electronic format and made accessible locally and nationally. The Redwood is available at www.redwoodlibrary.org. The Providence Athenaeum received a grant to provide electronic access to their Travel and Exploration collection. These unique materials can be accessed locally and nationally. The Athenaeum's catalog is available at www.providenceathenaeum.org.

Additionally, the Providence Public Library has used LSTA funds to assist in the conversion of at least 3,000 music score records to full MARC format, making them available through the CLAN database. The library's collection of 16,000 music scores is available on site but only half are in the database with full MARC records. A professional music cataloger is being supported to provide the necessary cataloging with LSTA support.

Each of these projects has successfully provided access to their unique materials through their catalogs and related networks. All have reported that the initial barrier in completing their project was that the work that had to be accomplished was extremely labor intensive, more so than they expected. They also encountered difficulty in finding personnel to implement the projects.

CE and training related to resource sharing and online access is ongoing in the use of the ILL system, delivery methods and related technical knowledge required to participate in resource sharing. Cataloging and automation methods are discussed with current and future RILINK members to insure accurate participation in the program. Workshops and discussions have been used to initiate and expand the use of Find It! as well as the use of First Search, CLAN, HELIN and related search engines and databases.

Goal: All Rhode Islanders have access to books and other materials, information, services, and programs that meet their individual needs as lifelong learners and library users.

As determined by the Rhode Island library community, OLIS administration and staff, and the Library Board of Rhode Island, priorities for achieving this goal were:

- Services to individuals with disabilities
- Access to information services for the public
- Library and information services to state government

The following OLIS projects addressed this goal:

- Talking Books Plus
- Information and Research Services
- Find It! Rhode Island (State Government Information)
- World Wide Web/Publication

OLIS administration provides for the administration of OLIS and the federal Library Services and Technology Act program, as well as the development of other OLIS programs. Administration prepares planning and budget materials for OLIS programs, and works with the Library Board of Rhode Island in establishing policies and developing priorities for the programs and services and in evaluating progress in meeting the goals and priorities of the Five-Year Plan.

Results:

Talking Books Plus is a very cohesive, well-focused and successful program. As the population grows for this service in Rhode Island, the challenge will be to address the marketing and outreach needs to expand use of the materials. See the "Results of In-Depth Evaluation" section for additional comments about Talking Books Plus.

The **Information and Research Services** project provides an interface for state executive branch agency staff that need job-related information. The Service has successfully provided an accessible collection of Census Bureau materials and offers assistance in its use. A web form has been created by the OLIS team for state employees to submit their questions online. Reference requests are responded to via e-mail, fax, and telephone or by mail. Interlibrary loan is provided for state employees.

In May 2001, **Find It! Rhode Island** (www.find-it.state.ri.us) was launched as government information Locator Service (GILS), providing an infrastructure for public access to RI state and local government information online. Find It! was developed through the collaboration of OLIS, the RI Secretary of State's Office and Microsoft. Government websites embed metatags for identification by the search engine. An OLIS team created the procedures and content and contacted state agencies about the project and trained webmasters in use of the metatags.

A Find It! logo has been used on all materials to promote awareness of the site and the service. The logo has appeared on bookmarks, bumper stickers, mouse pads and as a link on all OLIS websites and many other state agency sites. The logo and site have become popular quickly. The site receives many inquiries about records, population, local history, tourism and recreation. All current Rhode Island state agencies and town websites have metatags linking them to Find It!

> *"Find It! has become an important link for government information in our library."* *Focus group participant*

World Wide Web/Publications is the project that provides support for the dissemination of information and reports produced by OLIS and Library Programs through Library Programs' web pages and publications and OLIS' web pages and publications.

A gatekeeper role has successfully been developed through this project. A wealth of information and resources is easily accessible due to the coordination and planning used to implement the project's objectives. The abundance of library-related information can be overwhelming for the sources and uses of the information. Current and relevant information about Library Programs and LORI are important to the library community in Rhode Island and to residents who rely on a knowledgeable library staff.

The work in this project is usually transparent to the user, but the results have been mentioned by almost all participants in the evaluation discussions as they referred to information available through Library Programs or the LORI website. The project assists the Library Programs projects by developing electronic alternatives to print information through online databases, financial and statistical reports and online access to information about continuing information and training.

Results of in depth evaluations

Library of Rhode Island (LORI) Website

"I like the LORI website – it uses minimalist web architecture – it is laid out simply and logically." *Focus group participant*

"Everything is easy to find using the drop down boxes at the top of the page."
Survey respondent

The Library of Rhode Island (LORI) is a virtual statewide multitype library network that serves as the gateway to library and information resources in the State of Rhode Island for libraries, library staff and the general public. LSTA funds are used to maintain and develop LORI activities and its website. Activities that have been supported by LSTA funds include:

- LORI grants to libraries to support electronic linkages and resource sharing
- Online e-mail access, Internet and web access for librarians and libraries
- Delivery services to libraries
- Support for all facets of the interlibrary loan process
- Continuing education and training for library staff involved in resource sharing and online access projects

LORI initiatives and projects include successfully reevaluating the interlibrary loan system and reengineering the work flows to provide a more efficient use of ILL processes and clearer documentation for users, as well as introducing new electronic and print ILL forms for use. OLIS staff continue to maintain ILL codes and procedures, to provide an ILL clearinghouse and training in interlibrary loan procedures and to maintain the electronic and e-mail based ILL system. Similarly, the LORI Committee developed, reviewed, and implemented standards for participation of over 160 LORI member libraries.

OLIS staff also continue to work with the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Rhode Island Network for Educational Technology (RINET), the Higher Education Library and Information Network (HELIN), the Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN), the Consortium of Rhode Island Academic and Research Libraries (CRIARL), the Rhode Island Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK) and others to find ways to make low or no cost telecommunications links available to LORI libraries. These partnerships as well as continuation of the Bell Atlantic, now Verizon, agreement with the Public Utilities Commission to provide free services to schools and libraries, Erate Funding provided through the Telecommunications Act of 1996, master price agreements with vendors and other vendor arrangements have facilitated the establishment of a high speed low cost telecommunications infrastructure for RI libraries and schools that encourages further cooperative projects.

The LORI website (www.lori.state.ri.us) has been redesigned and offers an easy to use interface and a logical progression of information. Information that is posted to the website is provided by staff of OLIS Library Programs in order to insure that it is accurate and up to date. Information is checked and pages refreshed daily to provide the Rhode Island library community with a dynamic and relevant access point to information. E-mail and listservs keep people informed of recent information and create a sense of a virtual community of information and resources.

According to participants in the evaluation discussion group, some of the features that they use often are:

- **The special interest discussion groups (SIGS)**

  "I liked it when the SIGS were private for local library users. They no longer are."

  "There used to be a sense of community on the SIGS – posting has become too hard and public."

  "I like the fact that the Children's SIG is heavily used – there is a lot of discussion and that's good."

- **The library job posting site**

  "I like to keep track of who is going where."

  "This is a good resource to stay current on jobs."

- **The calendar**

  "I look at the calendar to stay informed about dates for activities."

- **Information and registration for continuing education**

- **Interlibrary loan and delivery information and forms**

- **First Search**

  "One of the most important things is to get new passwords for First Search. The link to the new password should be on the home page every three months to make it easy to find."

  "We need to train librarians into using First Search first, since it has CLAN and HELIN access."

"HELIN was too hard too find."

- **Young Adult Roundtable**
- **Quick Links**

The LORI website, according to some participants, is as easy to use as the old Providence Journal Almanac, which has not been available since 1998, and which listed all local and state government information.

Participants also praised the success so far with the LORI website. Some additional comments were offered, as follows, to improve its use and viability:

> *"We haven't created the sense that the web site is the premium place to go. We need to develop the identity, name and sense of purpose as a library website and portal. "Focus group participant*
>
> *"We need to stick with whatever we have developed and provide a sense of continuity to keep people's attention." Survey respondent*
>
> *"Library directors need to point their staff to the LORI website as an important access point for information." Focus group participant*

Rhode Island Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK)
(LORI sub-grantee)

> *"Books that sat on shelves for years are being requested elsewhere at other school libraries." Focus group participant*
>
> *"Professionally, RILINK has brought us closer. We have a community (school librarians) that we may not have had before." Survey respondent*
>
> *"We have an open house night for parents in member schools to show them how to use the 'book bag' on the RILINK site." Focus group participant*
>
> *"There are requests waiting for me when I come in every morning."*
> *Focus group participant*

RILINK, similar to other LSTA projects in Rhode Island, is a model success story of the use of LSTA funding to assist a pilot program begun by two Rhode Island librarians. RILINK is the Rhode Island statewide school library network. RILINK was founded in 1998 by Linda Wood and Paul Venancio with an LSTA grant from the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, through a grant proposal submitted by the Middletown and South Kingstown High School Libraries.

Wood and Venancio's vision of expanded access to students was a timely response to LSTA goals of creating electronic linkages between libraries and supporting shared resources to benefit residents of Rhode Island. This synergy has created an exciting dynamic and momentum in the development of the network. RILINK has continued to grow in size and stature during the past four years of its existence and support by LORI and LSTA funding.

The original LSTA funding for RILINK supported a contract with Follett, RILINK's software vendor.

RILINK is now part of the East Bay Educational Collaborative, which also supports the Rhode Island Science Materials Resource Center, providing science materials and science kits to more than 1200 Rhode Island elementary school teachers in 17 K-6 elementary school districts.

RILINK is a web-based union catalog of participating member's school library materials. Data from each school is merged with data from other RILINK members and made available as one RILINK catalog through the Web.

Today, through RILINK and its catalog, 25,000 students and teachers in Rhode Island (of RILINK member schools) have access to over 300,000 books and materials. Access is available to students in their school, public library or at home. Free pick up and delivery of materials are provided through statewide interlibrary loan and the delivery service, operated by OLIS through a contract with a local delivery firm. Currently many members receive delivery 2-3 times per week, providing very quick turnaround of materials.

> *"I doubted that it would work at the beginning, but we are able to fill almost every request, and have ours filled."* *Focus group participant*

An interesting benefit to RILINK members is the ability to access books and materials from other libraries throughout Rhode Island. Through the Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN), which is the resource-sharing network for public libraries in Rhode Island, students have a wider collection to find the needed material. Member libraries in CLAN also have their collection available to RILINK members, so that specialized collections in health care and other areas are available for student use. RILINK libraries are also lenders in the statewide network. Public libraries can access RILINK collections if they do not find needed materials in CLAN.

RILINK also provides over 10,000 links to websites attached to 1,600 subject headings. All are maintained at the vendor's server to guarantee availability and suitability to the thousands of students who take advantage of these links. When students access a record in the catalog they are presented with the appropriate links to Internet reference materials and sites. Training workshops for support staff at member schools, in the use of the MARC Magician software and us of the website, continues to be important.

RILINK 1998-2002					
	1998	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**
Schools	2	8	19	23	25
Items borrowed			1100		
Catalog entries			200,000	280,000	300,000
LSTA funds	$31,000	$26,000	$20,685	$21,640	

According to the RILINK Executive Director, one of the largest challenges ahead for the project is continuing to add new members every year. RILINK has adopted a very colorful and catchy logo and approached schools and school boards throughout the state with an attractive video explaining the benefits of membership. The video has been presented a number of times to superintendents of schools, teachers, parents and librarians. The momentum behind RILINK's growth is sustainable with the membership campaign underway and the continued advocacy by existing members.

> *"A great thing about RILINK is that new members are nurtured and guided by existing members."* *Survey respondent*

RILINK's virtual catalog, at www.rilink.org has recently been moved to a server in the office of the public library consortium at the Warwick Public Library. This cost saving move is also a positive step in the collaborative environment between Rhode Island schools and libraries.

The recent campaign called "Help bring RILINK home" was initiated in support of a challenge grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to help toward the purchase of equipment and software to house the union catalog locally and make it available to Rhode Island schools.

> *"RILINK is grass roots, it's democracy in action, it's bottom up control."*
> *Focus group participant*

RILINK's vibrant website and newsletter are another example of the "grass roots" sensibility that operates within. The original vision of RILINK as an equalizer of access for all students in Rhode Island is still alive and well through the leadership of its executive director. The website and newsletter carry many student and teacher stories about successfully searching RILINK for relevant information. Both the website and newsletter are easy to read, easy to use and seem to have the user, or student, in mind.

> *"I have used RILINK promotional material and posted adverts for RILINK, made the RILINK homepage the page that comes up first on our web access. At this point local funding is used to subscribe to RILINK although we would certainly be interested in other funding sources."* *Survey respondent*

The greatest barrier to additional membership is the lack of automated catalog and circulation systems in many of the high school libraries, especially in the Providence and Central Falls areas with very modest budgets. Middle Schools are another potential group of members and many have similar automation issues. The challenge then for further participation in RILINK by the state's high schools and middle schools will rely on local school districts funding automated systems in their school libraries, or finding a local library partner to assist them.

Additional challenges in the near future include the need for a new server to continue to expand to new members and provide quicker response time. Another is the need to merge and enhance records in the database to make it easier to search and locate items, providing annotations as well as reading and interest levels.

Requirements for membership include having bibliographic data for holdings in MARC format, be a member of LORI (Rhode Island's statewide library network,) adopt the LORI bar-coding requirements, a Z39.50 compliant remote access and a web server running Windows NT or similarly recent Windows operating system.

In 2002 annual dues will be based on student enrollment of the member school. Dues will be $1.50 per student, with a maximum to $1,500 and a minimum to $500. Maintenance fees for the Follett Circ Plus, Catalog Plus and Web Collection plus will also be a flat $365.60.

RILINK is an exceptional project that clearly demonstrates the benefits of LSTA support.

> *"LSTA funding has made RILINK possible, which, in turn has greatly enhanced our ability to serve our patrons. Resource sharing has been a boon to schools throughout the state.* *Survey respondent*

Homework Helpers
(LORI sub grantee)

> *"Topic Search makes it easy to point to subjects."* *Survey respondent*

> *"I like the cost and availability."* *Survey respondent*

> *"Remote access providing 24/7 availability is a big plus."* *Focus group participant*

> *"The back button does not take you out of your search like other databases do, and I think that works well for people."* *Focus group participant*

Homework Helpers is another resource sharing project targeted to students, teachers and parents. Homework Helpers is a free service available through any public library in the

state and on any Internet-connected PC to CLAN cardholders. Homework Helpers is available through the Providence Public Library website to 68 public libraries.

The transition from Gale's databases to EBSCO databases has been a bit frustrating according to some participants in the discussion group held in the fall of 2001 to review Homework Helpers. Users need to repeat the searching behaviors that they learn in the library. Many users call their public library with questions about its use. Public libraries have assumed a help desk function as they guide home users through a search on Searchasaurus. A "tip sheet" has been prepared for home use to assist users in duplicating their experience from the library.

Improvements suggested for Homework Helpers primarily include training and promotional activities. Training for librarians and users is informal and not planned as a part of the project. There is no current funding or assistance for training.

> *"I like the links to other related subject areas."* *Focus group participant*

The school librarian is the key person to promote and train students for using Homework Helper. Promotional efforts to target school librarians, teachers, superintendents of schools and community centers would benefit the success of the project.

According to a mid-year usage report from February 2001 to October 2001, forty-five libraries recorded a total of over 116,000 searches and over 50,000 full text articles accessed.

Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed, during his efforts to pass the Reed Amendment, which authorizes $250 million to improve school libraries, called the RILINK project an "Innovative solution to the challenges faced by school libraries."

Talking Books Plus and Tech ACCESS

> *"There is a person 8am – 4:30 pm at Talking Books Plus. The whole office has really become a help desk for users."* *Focus group participant*

> *"Personal contact is the key to the success of the program."* *Focus group participant*

Talking Books Plus (TB Plus) is the popular name for the Rhode Island Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The current collection contains over 30,000 titles. TB Plus is administered by OLIS Library Programs. Children who are enrolled in TB Plus can participate in the Summer Reading Program sponsored by OLIS.
Talking Times is the very informative quarterly newsletter that TB Plus publishes. Talking Times continues the theme of personal contact between users and providers with a focus on user experiences, volunteer accomplishments, new features or services as well as reader's advisories.

Large Print Books have been available through TB Plus, although with an interruption in service. They are available through the Fuller Branch of the East Providence Public Library. One letter from a TB Plus user stated:

> *"I enjoyed all the books, except The Joy Luck Club, I only read 100 pages. I am also very pleased that the large Print Books will continue to be available. I prayed hard that someone would have a change of mind. Thanks so much."*

The East Providence Public Library has an active book by mail program and a book service to five nursing homes in the area. There are 74 active patrons in the mail program and homebound delivery to 17 households in the area. The nursing home program is a very valuable project to support a sense of enjoyment and active living.

Descriptive videos are also available through the Lincoln Public Library.

LSTA funding for the Talking Books Plus program provides

- A portion of their staff and operating costs
- Support for their quarterly newsletter
- Shipping and warehousing for talking books
- Document services, consulting and training through a partnership with TechACCESS
- Grant funds for library services to individuals with disabilities

TechAccess was founded in 1991 as the central information, referral and demonstration site for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). Workshops on assistive technology use and disabilities in libraries have been held throughout the state. The workshops, "TechACCESS, Your Public Library, and You" augment the consultation, information and referral role that the partnership provides. TechAccess provides orientation sessions and workshops for librarians and library staff about assistive technology services and products.

TechACCESS also provides alternative access to state government information to individuals who require Braille, large print, audiocassette or computer files to meet their needs. The partnership of OLIS Library Programs with TechACCESS provides the expertise and experience with adaptive and assistive technology issues and services that OLIS cannot provide.

A librarian stated: *"I have been able to refer people to TechACCESS a number of times and they always have a knowledgeable person there to respond to calls and provide valuable information. The benefit of the partnership among TechACCESS, ATAP and TB Plus strengthens the whole network of available information in Rhode Island."*

The Regional Librarian for TB Plus has recognized that one of the fastest growing age groups in Rhode Island is people over the age of 85. Additionally, the number of residents in the age group over 60 is increasing to almost 20% of the state's population.

He states that "…in the Rhode Island Disability Chartbook (1998) approximately 19, 812 or 13% of Rhode Islanders age 65 or older report they have a severe disability. In the Talking Books Plus Program, 58 % of our patrons are 60 years or older. With these statistics in mind, we will continue to develop our outreach activities to support Rhode Island's senior population." He expects to increase the number of residents taking advantage of TB Plus services.

TB Plus has a disciplined feedback process to elicit information from users and from libraries in the state. Each year a Customer Satisfaction survey is conducted with users to measure the degree of satisfaction they receive from the service. Respondents to the survey during 1998, 1999 and 2001 scored the following results for Overall rating of TB Plus services:

TB PLUS Satisfaction Ratings				
Responses	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1998 (318)	77%	19%	3%	1%
1999 (359)	77%	20%	2%	1%
2001 (265)	77%	21%	2%	0%

Talking Times, the TB Plus newsletter, made available in large print, cassette and electronic versions, also received very high marks from users with over 78% feeling that it was an excellent or good newsletter.

In February 2001 a survey concerning services for persons with disabilities was distributed to all public libraries in the state. Thirty-six public libraries responded (75% of all public libraries). The survey results are significant in developing a baseline for awareness and planning for assistive services, technology and materials. Questions about screen magnifiers, TDD, assistive listening systems, and "Bobby approved" (handicapped accessible) websites among others, reveal a nascent awareness of needs. Given the small percent of libraries that offer such services (from 14 to 20%) the number of librarians who responded that they would attend a workshop on these issues was a rewarding 97%. This survey will provide Talking Books Plus with a guide to future projects and use of LSTA funds to assist users who have difficulties using a library in Rhode Island.

Other improvements suggested include increased attention and promotion for school age children, and wider use of the excellent TB Plus materials and newsletter through an increased outreach campaign in the state.

Local Library Development

Mother Goose Asks "Why?"

> *"I started to read to my children again."*
>
> *"The Mother Goose program made library users out of non users – including parents who never had a card before."*

Mother Goose Asks "Why?" (MGAW) was developed by the Vermont Center for the Book and funded for three years by the National Science Foundation to expand to 14 sites around the country in addition to Vermont. The National Science Foundation provided Rhode Island with materials for 100 families for each of the three years, and training for librarians and others.

Mother Goose Asks "Why?" is a literacy project that helps to enable parents to share children's books and science related activities with their children. The project in Rhode Island is a partnership with the Office of Library and Information Services, public libraries, museums and agencies serving the needs of children. Local support includes the Providence Children's Museum, the Providence Public Library, the Cranston Public Library, the Newport Public Library, CHILDSPAN, and Rhode Island READS.

The project provides a series of four hands-on sessions led by a librarian who introduces parents and caregivers to nine picture books for children ages 3-8 along with related science activities. Participants receive a tote bag with the books, science materials and a guidebook to take home and share with their children, along with passes to the Providence Children's Museum. The Rhode Island team has added a fifth session to introduce parents to the materials and services available at the library and parents receive an additional book from another partner, First Book.

> *"The difference in the pre and post survey with parents about their own and their children's perceptions of science are dramatic – showing a comfort with science that did not exist before."*

Training sessions have been held each year for librarians and agency partners, initially by Vermont Center for the Book trainers and now by local Rhode Island Mother Goose team members. The versatile and enthusiastic Mother Goose team, led by the Rhode Island State Coordinator will also conduct statewide training in 2002 for the You Can Count on Mother Goose program librarians. In spring 2002, the team will also conduct orientations for the New England Association for the Education of Young Children conference, the Eastern Connecticut Libraries and the CHILDSPAN Summer Conference.

Some of the many benefits from the project are reflected in comments from participants and team members, such as:

> *"MGAW has increased my family's use of the library."*
>
> *"This project empowers parents to read to their children."*

"I'll never read a book to my children the same way."

"The project makes a connection with books and literacy."

"Mother Goose helps to demystify the library, books, science, learning and literacy."

"Develops self confidence – participants are very supportive of each other as they pass the books around taking turns reading."

MGAW Activities 1998-2001			
Year	series held	parents/providers	libraries/agencies
1998/1999	8	100	11
1999/2000	23	268	43
2000/2001	16	162	38

Participants in the project report that the number of participants at times is a function of the number of program books and bags for which funding is available. They also would like to find a lower cost option to the present arrangement so that they can afford additional kits.

"The hands-on activities are the carrot to involve parents and children."

"MGAW has offered whole new insights to parents about how their child processes information and learns."

"I never thought of science as related to everyday life before."

"I am having fun with my kids – reading and interacting."

"You don't have to know the answers – it's ok to investigate and find information together."

Suggestions for improvement include:

- A sixth make-up session can be added for parents who miss a session
- Individual follow-up is required by the agency partner to insure that the participants are retained throughout the sessions in order to reduce the absentee rate. The agency partners may need assistance on the recruitment of participants. Recruitment materials are needed.
- Training for librarians needs to emphasize outreach and recruitment and how to collaborate with local agencies.
- The agency partner must be committed to the project. The MGAW team should find a way to keep them committed throughout the sessions.

- All materials need to be available in Spanish as well as English.

"Mother Goose leverages important partnerships in order to be successful – wide partnerships, different populations and acceptance."

Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI)

The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative is a statewide collaboration of seven public libraries that is administered by the Providence Public Library. The coordinators of the program are assisted by The Providence Public Library, Coventry Public Library, Cranston Public Library, East Providence Public Library, Pawtucket Public Library, George Hail Free Library in Warren and the West Warwick Public Library.

These libraries all share a common vision that families throughout Rhode Island will have free and equal access to educational opportunities conveniently located in their own communities. RIFLI's mission is to provide learner centered literacy programs for RI families facing social, economic and educational barriers due to limited English language skills.

The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative's Family Reading Program is a free ESL intergenerational literacy program with a curriculum centered on discussion and writing about personal experiences. Similar to the MGAW project, parents take a leading role in fostering reading and learning among their preschool and school-aged children. Families are then guided and encouraged to develop their reading, writing and language skills in small groups, with children and parents working together as co-learners to refine their skills.

The location of the programs in local public libraries helps to connect all family members with information about programs and services in their community. Each library hosts one or more sessions a year. Each session is one hour and a half, with two sessions per week over a ten-week period. There are three cycles a year – fall, winter and spring. Participants are recruited through word of mouth, referrals from local agencies and promotional materials in the libraries. Referrals also came from press releases to local media and mailings to local agencies.

> *"I like that it is in the library, it's a good place to learn. Everything is free and they helped me get a library card." said a parent participant, in the discussion group held to assist with the evaluation. A librarian involved with the project in her library also feels that "…locations are good for walkers and for taking public transportation."*

According to state information that OLIS uses for training librarians in the RIFLI project:

- Over 100,000 Rhode Islanders are foreign-born with 5,000 new immigrants arriving each year. About 40% of recent immigrants have great difficulty reading and writing in English.
- Forty three percent of Rhode Islanders rank in the lowest levels of literacy, which is much lower than the levels needed to compete in today's economy.

There are approximately forty-two languages represented by the participants in the project during the past four years as well as over sixty-two countries of origin represented. [2]

RIFLI Statistics 1998-2001					
	1998	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**Totals**
Adult Enrollment	200	541	835	926	2,502
Child Enrollment	92	312	305	293	1,002
Families		168	200	179	547
Tutors (volunteers)	61	124	251	247	683
Tutoring Hours	1,526	4,145	5,472	6,173	17,316
New Library Cards	79	219	246	328	872
Retention Rate		69%	86%	83%	

According to the project coordinator, the retention rate has increased during 2001 as the teachers (library staff or project staff members) have assumed a greater role in the actual classroom teaching. The teacher or staff member has, in the past, turned the class over to the volunteer tutor after designing the session and coordinating the logistics.

LSTA funding for the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative			
1998	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**
$65,000	$65,000	$64,472	$65,000

Over 2500 adults and 1,000 children, by 2001 have benefited from the opportunities afforded through this program. Many of the adults, having very basic literacy skills, have been able to play a greater role in their family and community by pursuing opportunities unavailable to them without these literacy skills. Of the 578 students tracked in 2001, 40% showed improvement in literacy skills and comprehension. Parents have found methods for modeling behaviors and skills to their children to help them succeed in school and in their communities. Access to computers and training in computer skills has created an entire universe of resources previously unavailable to many in the programs. The open enrollment feature of the program added significantly to the pool of literacy programs available in Rhode Island.

[2] RIFLI Statistical Information

At least 683 volunteer slots have been filled by tutors in the RIFLI program since 1998. Each of these volunteers has made a significant contribution to the overall quality of life for the entire community they worked in. Since October 1998, 10,113 materials have been taken out by adults and children in the program. Over 17,000 hours of volunteer time spent with learners in the program allowed valuable resources to support other critical needs of the library and the community.

The library partners in the RIFLI project have signaled to their communities that the public library is not only relevant to the needs of the community but that it is a critical community asset, which has more than earned its funding and place in the community. Additionally, the stature of the library is enhanced for future programs and budget decisions with residents. Support for the RIFLI programs in some of the partner libraries has increased to include additional hours and staffing in order to assist with the overall funding. Resident volunteers and staff have also enhanced their lives as they have learned important project management, tutoring, computer and relationship skills.

This is a successful and well-organized program. The coordinators, volunteers and library staff use the experiences from each preceding year to strengthen the program. They have used a database program to track the statistics they feel they need to measure success and to provide them with feedback to make corrections and adjustments. They have even trained people in the use of the database to insure that the information producing the statistics is accurate. When they have seen an indicator such as retention rate slip, they focus on the factors causing it and introduce a change to the program. They use a pre-survey or indicator format with an interview for each participant to determine where best to place the individual in the level of courses. Participants are asked for comments following completion of a program.

Each cycle has produced a collection of student writings called *Our Stories*, which illustrate the new skills that participants have learned. The stories are touching, funny, motivating and some a little sad as the students explain their struggle with using their new skills to improve the quality of their lives and their family's.

In the computer part of the program, coordinators used a simple checklist to determine an entry ability level for adult learners. At each stage of the program and in each component, the coordinators, tutors, volunteers, librarians and all involved have used a methodical disciplined approach to accomplishing their goals. RIFLI has become an integral program in these communities and throughout Rhode Island, as well as being perceived as an integral part of the participating library's services.

The wealth of documentation on each year of the project as well as the results, successes, and areas for improvement are readily available and offer a professional analysis of each component of the project. It is rare to see this level of documentation and analysis, and then a correction to improve results. The RIFLI project, started locally by the Providence Public Library as the Family Writing Center and then implemented throughout the state with funding from a variety of sources, is a terrific model. It is a model for the

collaboration of public libraries and community, and a model of effective leadership and implementation.

Six hundred and twenty seven (627) people were already on the waiting list as of September 2001. Another 313 people were added during the fall of 2001. Two hundred and twenty one (221) people were called from the list during the year. According to the RIFLI team, the average length of time for a person to be on the waiting list is 5 months. Additional space is needed for the program as well as additional participating libraries. Some of the public libraries that host the project stated their frustration with the limited space available for the project. In some cases, the RIFLI program is taking over space from other public activities and service areas in the libraries.

> *"…the continuation of funding for the Family Literacy program should be a top priority. There are so many non-native speakers streaming into Rhode Island, and they love coming to our public libraries. We need to continue to support this program."*

Lessons learned

Rhode Island residents have received valuable benefits from library projects supported with LSTA funds. The decentralized and project approach to use of some of the funding has enabled many innovative and needed projects to flourish. The preceding in-depth evaluation of certain projects reflects this. As participants noted, these projects are grass roots and community focused which requires a great deal of outreach and coordination. Two of the most important elements of OLIS' methodology include the constant evaluation process that it uses and a disciplined feedback and measurement system. The Library Board of Rhode Island composed of citizens and representatives from libraries, advises OLIS Library Programs about library development, interlibrary cooperation and resource sharing in the state. All LSTA sub-grantees maintain an ongoing evaluation process to meet their annual evaluation. Expenditures, staffing and use statistics are carefully maintained.

The decentralized, project approach has been very successful in achieving many of the goals and objectives that were desired. In this type of dynamic environment, outreach and coordination staff may at times struggle as they ascend the learning curve associated with their projects. Some staff participants in the OLIS discussion commented that the "Five Year Plan may have been too ambitious…we were overextended" at times during the implementation of projects. Similar comments include:

- "Projects from the 5-year plan at times seemed like a To Do List."
- "Some of the LSTA projects in Local Library Development may have been included in an artificial category…they may not have been given the right home."

Some of the factors contributing to this sense of overextension and being overwhelmed are:

- There has been a personnel transition during the past 5 years, especially relating to LSTA.
- Existing personnel were expected to accomplish fairly ambitious objectives, sometimes without the use of additional resources.
- Budgets and finances will always play a role in tackling new projects as outside partners and libraries slowly increase their monetary and staffing support for new projects as they see the benefits to their community.

Other lessons learned concern the use of public relations and the awareness of the programs by the library community as well as by the general public. From the evaluator's perspective, OLIS has created an amazing number of discussion forums within the state, in conferences, committees, online SIGs, and has provided access to library project information through their website (www.lori.state.ri.us). The website is easy to use and makes it easy to find any information concerning a library project and all the documentation that accompanies it. Additionally, all LSTA supported project information (both on-line and in print) bear the IMLS logo and support tag. The website is attractive, and provides links to people and resources involved with libraries and OLIS projects throughout the state.

At the same time, participants in the evaluation discussions expressed a need for additional public relations and awareness about the role that OLIS plays in administering LSTA funds. They believe that librarians statewide at times are confused or unaware about OLIS' funding methods or source of funds. One of the suggestions is that OLIS should revive the "Benefits Summary" report that was used in 1999 to explain to Rhode Island librarians, legislators and local communities the source and use of funds. The report was described as very successful in explaining the funding arrangements and the benefits to local communities. A table that was used in the 1999 report breaks down the benefits to every academic, special, school, and public library in the state as well as every state agency. The analysis extrapolates benefits for such services as:

- Delivery System
- Resource Sharing
- ILL Clearinghouse
- Summer Reading Program
- Grant-in-aid

Suggestions were also made for a professional annual report from OLIS with an LSTA component to use as an awareness and public relations piece.

Participants in the discussion groups and in the survey overwhelmingly favor the current method of prepackaged library projects to a lot of small innovative, eclectic grants. They said that diffusing the LSTA funds among many smaller grants would not benefit the majority of Rhode Island libraries and communities. They feel that future projects should continue to address needs within the state and not simply fit into existing projects of OLIS. The role of community and state partners is a crucial component of successful

programs and librarians would like to see more collaboration with other organizations to leverage the LSTA funds further.

Perhaps the most important lesson that has been learned by the libraries is that with each successful project such as RIFLI, RILINK, MGAW, Summer Reading and others, there still remain many unmet needs in the communities and the state. The waiting list for participation in the RIFLI project amazed even the most experienced librarians with the boundless needs in the communities for all that the libraries can offer. Librarians in Rhode Island have learned that their role in providing access to information and resources and community to all residents is a vital and important one. They have learned that there are many people in Rhode Island towns and cities who do not have a relationship with a library or a family tradition of library use and new methods of outreach and services are needed.

Brief review of evaluation process

The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) has used substantial amounts of LSTA funds to improve library services to residents of Rhode Island. The evaluation process was charged with determining the achievements that were accomplished toward meeting the goals of the Five-Year Plan. In the fall of 2001, The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, through the Chief Officers of State Libraries in the Northeast (COSLINE) contracted with Library Development Solutions (LDS), a library consulting firm in Princeton Junction, New Jersey to assist in the evaluation of its five year LSTA plan.

Evaluation criteria to view the overall success of LSTA funding toward these goals included:

- Awareness by libraries and citizens about benefits received from LSTA funding.
- Increases in electronic resource usage by libraries.
- The reach or population served, by various LSTA funded projects.
- What value added benefits or services have been realized by libraries in Rhode Island.

Library Development Solutions used a variety of methods to collect and analyze information concerning Rhode Island's achievements. These included a review of Rhode Island's Five-Year LSTA plan, all supporting documentation and annual reports to the IMLS. After identifying those projects that would receive closer analysis, Library Development Solutions scheduled visits to Rhode Island to meet with OLIS staff to discuss each of the plan's components and to develop an understanding of the overall plan. Interviews were held with staff from OLIS, Local Library Development, LORI, Talking Books Plus, and coordinators for the various projects being evaluated.

The consultants also met with librarians, library staff, agency partners and participants in the various projects in a series of focus group discussions. Over 75 participants discussed the various LSTA supported projects in the series of discussions. The participants were

recruited through OLIS, and by the participating public, academic and school libraries. The groups met at the RI Department of Administration building for a period of one to two hours. The discussions were lively and informative and offered participants and the consultant an opportunity to review the projects in an informal setting. Many of the comments and suggestions that were made during the discussions have been used in this report. Focus group discussions were arranged according to the following projects:

- Talking Books Plus
- Library of Rhode Island (LORI) Website
- Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative
- Rhode Island Family and Literacy Initiative Coordinators
- Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) Staff
- Homework Helpers
- RILINK
- Mother Goose Asks "Why"?

A survey instrument was developed by Library Development Solutions to collect additional information from Rhode Island librarians. The survey was mailed to a number of public, school and special libraries with an introductory note from OLIS. Recipients were provided an addressed return envelope by OLIS. Responses were forwarded to the consultant unopened. The survey is attached to this report.

LSTA in Rhode Island

Library Development Solutions, a Princeton, NJ, based library consulting firm, has been engaged by COSLINE on behalf of several state library agencies including the RI Office of Library and Information Services, to evaluate the impact of the federal LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) funding on the state's libraries during the last 5 years.

This survey is part of the evaluation of Rhode Island's LSTA program. We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in completing and returning the survey promptly. Your feedback will help OLIS in telling the LSTA "story" to federal legislators who make decisions concerning the future of this important legislation and will also help OLIS in developing the next LSTA five-year plan.

Rhode Island uses LSTA funding in six principal ways:

- **Local Library Development** – Targeting library and information services to people with limited functional literacy or information skills, including children from families below the poverty line, including the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI) and Mother Goose Asks "Why?" Includes OLIS field visits and consulting services
- **Library of Rhode Island (LORI**) - To establish or enhance electronic linkages among or between libraries – including RILINK and Homework Helpers, ILL, ILL Delivery Service, LORIPRO
- **Talking Books Plus-** Targeting library and information services to individuals with disabilities and persons having difficulty using a library individually and in collaboration with TechAccess
- **Information and Research Services** – Establishing or enhancing electronic linkages among or between libraries
- ***Find It! Rhode Island*** – Linking libraries electronically with education, social or information services
- **World Wide Web/Publications** – Linking libraries electronically with education, social or information services and assisting libraries in accessing information through electronics networks

Thank you in advance for your assistance.
Library Development Solutions

First, tell us about you and your library:

Library Name: **Library Address:**

Library Contact Person Completing Survey, include name and position/title:

Phone: **E-mail:**

Now, we need your opinion about LSTA funded projects.

In the last five years OLIS has used LSTA funds for a number of statewide projects that are listed below. Please indicate next to each project its value to you and the people who use your libraries by circling the number that most closely indicates the value of this service with 6 indicating "don't know, 5 indicating "high value", 1 indicating "low value" and "0" indicating "not applicable."

Continuing Education and Planning
Provides support for Local Library Development consulting services, planning efforts, continuing education and training opportunities for library staff and trustees, such as the" Soaring To Excellence" program, customer service training, and a study of effective reference service.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI)
Support and promotion of a statewide collaboration whose activities encourage family literacy including the free ESOL Family Literacy Program, serving families facing social, economic and educational barriers because of limited English language skills.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Rhode Island Library Information Network for Kids (RILINK)
Begun with an LSTA grant and continued LSTA support, approximately 25 school libraries, provide access for over 25,000 students through a cooperative online database.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Talking Books Plus (Regional LBPH)
Supports the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Statewide Delivery Service
Supports delivery of materials among all LORI libraries in the state.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

ILL Clearing House
Provides centralized ILL services for author and title requests submitted by any LORI library.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

LORI Website
Supports the development and maintenance of the LORI website and other government information sites.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Please share your opinion (regardless of your involvement in specific services) about how library service in Rhode Island has improved in the last five years from LSTA funds invested in statewide projects.

Benefit	**Least**				**Most**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Resource sharing					
Interlibrary Loan					
Delivery service					
Family literacy					
Public awareness of libraries					
Electronic resources					
Cooperation among all types of libraries					
Participation in library summer reading programs					
Sharing of expertise among library staff					
CE workshops					
Service to disabled residents					

Now, think about competitive LSTA sub-grants.
During the last four years, OLIS allocated a portion of LSTA funds for competitive sub-grants that were available to individual libraries, consortia, and libraries collaborating on a project. Competitive sub-grants were offered in two categories: Literacy and LORI.

Literacy Grants fund public library projects that initiate or develop literacy services that demonstrate well-designed collaboration with new or existing partners in and outside of the library network.

What, if anything, discourages you from applying for an LSTA-funded **Literacy** sub-grant? (Check all that apply)

Did not know grants were available
Lack of enough information about grants
Inexperience in writing grants
Lack of time and/or staff to manage a grant project
Grant category does not meet a specific need of the community
Not a public library
Other _____

LORI Grants fund projects that contribute to resource sharing among LORI libraries. LORI projects addressed one or more of the following LSTA priorities:

- establishing or enhancing electronic linkages among or between libraries
- linking libraries electronically with education, social or information services
- assisting libraries in accessing information through electronic networks
- encouraging libraries in different areas, and encouraging different types of libraries to establish consortia and share resources
- paying costs for libraries to acquire or share computer systems and telecommunications technologies

What, if anything, discourages you from applying for an LSTA-funded **LORI** sub-grant? (Check all that apply)

Did not know grants were available
Lack of enough information about grants
Inexperience in writing grants
Lack of time and/or staff to manage a grant project
Grant category does not meet a specific need of the community
Other_____

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS:

How has LSTA funding helped you in meeting local needs for service? Would you have been able to meet these needs without LSTA funding?

Did you produce a report, brochure, web page or any other promotional material that described your project? *Please provide a URL or copy of other printed materials when you return this survey.*

How will you sustain this project in the future (funding, staffing, etc)?

WHERE WE'RE GOING

What ideas can you offer about Rhode Island's use of LSTA funding during the next five-year period? LSTA funds can only be used for projects meeting federal eligibility requirements. Please keep LSTA's priorities in mind:

- Establishing or enhancing electronic linkages among or between libraries;
- Linking libraries electronically with educational, social or information services;
- Assisting libraries in accessing information through electronic networks;
- Encouraging libraries in different areas, and encouraging different types of libraries to establish consortia and share resources;
- Paying costs for libraries to acquire or share computer systems and telecommunications technologies; and
- Targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!
Please return your completed survey by Friday, February 22, 2002

Return to:
Library Development Solutions
64 Princeton Hightstown Road, Suite 106
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550

Or fax to 609-275-4784

If you have questions please contact us via email: abatwork@aol.com