

## **ODL Director's Report For the March 1, 2002 ODL Board Meeting**

I am continually amazed at how quickly the time has passed since our last ODL Board meeting when I sit down to write my director's report. It has become a cliché to say how busy the agency has been during this time but like many clichés it is true.

New Board Meeting Time.

Since our next Board meeting on Friday, March 1st will be our first meeting to begin at 10 a.m. rather than at 10:30 a.m., I thought I should highlight this change at the beginning of my report. I expect this change will be beneficial and hope that the switch in timing will not catch any of us off-guard.

Public Speaking.

I had the honor to be the speaker at the first recognition ceremony for December graduates of the University of Oklahoma Graduate School of Library and Information Studies. It was held in the University of Oklahoma Library Conoco Auditorium. There was a nice size group of graduates and their families present. My topic was "Things I Wished I Had Known When I Graduated from Library School."

I tried to make the presentation entertaining and useful. In my experience expectations cause me more grief than anything else so I tried to identify some things that twenty-five years in the profession cause me to now regard as basically obvious common sense but certainly caused me heart burn at the time. Perhaps it will help some of these graduates experience less angst in their careers.

The director of the library school entertained the group with a song following the presentation of certificates to the graduates and then there was cake and punch. One of my objectives was achieved, however, in that one of the graduates asked about employment opportunities at ODL during the social time. Increased visibility may help us with our recruitment for new staff.

I was contacted by two local radio stations regarding the withdrawal of a United States Government document on the public drinking water supply from libraries following the terrorist attacks. The radio stations were both interested in the impact of this decision by the United States Government Printing Office Depository Library Program on libraries in the state. The two stations were KKNB and KTOK. I didn't hear either of the interviews but two people told me they had heard the one on KTOK.

I told the radio stations that the tension between open access to government information and the realities of the new world order presented after September 11th is one that is being renegotiated daily. Concern is felt by some people over the precedent but not over the particular item removed. We are seeing discussion on the state level about proposed

changes to the state Open Meeting Law and Open Records Law that would allow for security discussions to be restricted in the future.

I also had the opportunity to be interviewed for a segment of the Metropolitan Library System's program on cable television called "Read About It." B.J. Williams is the host of the program. B.J. also serves as the president of the Oklahoma Center for the Book this year. Other ODL staff members who have been on the program include Glenda Carlile, executive director for the Oklahoma Center for the Book, Bill Young of our Public Information Office, and Karen Fite of the federal government information division.

I spoke about the services ODL provides to public libraries. I took copies of the Oklahoma Almanac and the Oklahoma Agencies, Boards, and Commissions to show as well since the program tries to tie into books that viewers can read. The Oklahoma Almanac is a treasure trove of information about Oklahoma so I thought it would be good to promote it. The Oklahoma Agencies, Boards, and Commissions or, as we refer it in in-house, the ABCs is less well known than the Almanac but contains wonderful information about state agencies and how to contact them.

#### **ODL Staff.**

I have detailed Vicki Sullivan, the Administrative Librarian in charge of Government Information, to special duty as the Deputy Director for ODL. The "detail to special duty" is a term that the state Office of Personnel Management uses to describe assigning an employee to a position in the agency other than their normal assignment. The maximum time of such an assignment is six months. Vicki began her detail on January 2, 2002. With the start of the legislative session, I believed it was critical to have someone in place to oversee budget and legislation.

Susan Feller, the executive director of the Oklahoma Endowment for Literacy and Reading, also began work at ODL in January. Susan has been hard at work examining the files and existing documents on the endowment. She has met with the Oklahoma Center for the Book staff and other ODL staff to become acquainted with the activities of ODL.

Based on her experience in the field of fundraising and philanthropy, Susan has some proposals for the Board to consider regarding the endowment. You will find her report in tab d of this packet. The discussion of Susan's proposal is on the agenda for Board action.

#### **Legislative Activities.**

I attended the Mountain Plains Library System annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona in early December. A state legislator, Representative Barbara Staggs from eastern Oklahoma received the outstanding library legislator award for her legislation last year that created a revolving fund and ongoing appropriation for public library construction. Since the Mountain Plains Library System is an eleven state organization, the recognition of Representative Staggs is noteworthy.

After the program, many librarians from other states approached us to tell us how much they wished they had a similar fund in their state. Representative Staggs has done something worthwhile for public libraries in rural areas. It's nice to know that Oklahoma is ahead of other states in some areas.

The majority of my legislative activities over the past month have involved the budget. As you know from reading the paper, the revenue forecasts for this fiscal year have not materialized. In light of this budget shortfall, ODL reduced our budget by 1% for the current fiscal year. Preliminary meetings with the House of Representatives have been held. We have met with a small subcommittee of House members, led by Representative Mary Easley of Tulsa regarding ODL's budget request for the coming fiscal year.

Rep. Begley, the chair of the House appropriations subcommittee on education, has told us that there will be no new money requests heard so we have spent our time meeting with the legislators on how we will reduce our budget. We were requested to present information to the legislators on our 1% budget reduction for the current year and how we would take a 5% reduction for the next fiscal year. Agencies were requested to reduce budgets in ways that minimized the impact on customers. Vicki Sullivan began her assignment as Deputy Director with this responsibility.

In our presentation to four legislators, we were told that we had achieved this charge. The legislators were complimentary as to the information we presented. On the same day as our meeting with the House members, the Governor's budget was available. The Governor had recommended a 4.11% reduction in our budget rather than the 5% the House asked us to provide them.

There have been reports of possible budget reductions of up to 15% of some or all state agencies. At this point, the situation is very fluid with changing numbers depending on with whom you are speaking. I believe it may be later in the spring before the House, Senate, and Governor reach agreement about the dollars necessary to balance the budget.

The Oklahoma Library Association held their annual legislative day at the state Capitol on Tuesday, February 12th this year. The message to legislators was to preserve ODL's budget as much as possible because of the importance of the services provided to all types of libraries particularly in the statewide databases and state aid. There were approximately 180 attendees from all parts of the state so it was a record turnout. It was very heartening to know that our constituents appreciate the services provided by ODL.

### **Changes in the Travel Policies.**

For those of you who travel some distance to attend the ODL Board meetings, I have good news. The reimbursement rate for mileage has been raised to 36.5 cents per mile. In addition, for those staying in Oklahoma City the lodging rate has gone up to \$65 per night and the per diem has gone up to \$38. The remainder of the state is \$55 for lodging and \$30 per Diem.

**Personal Note.**

The recent ice storm reinforced my admiration of the pioneers who settled this country as well as for my current day counterparts who endured many more difficulties than I did. Our house was without electricity for five days. Because of the age of our home, we still had heat, hot water, and a stove that worked. We had the expense of having an electrician restore our electrical box to functioning and the hassle of getting the telephone and cable repair people scheduled to restore service. Our back yard is covered with limbs that will have to be hauled away.

Reports from the western part of the state, however, are that many are still without power and do not expect it to be restored completely for another eight weeks. Last year it was our Board members Clyde and Jesse's area that were most affected by the ice and loss of power. I know Clyde was without power for two weeks and I'm not sure about Jesse. However sympathetic I was at the time, I am more so now.

I hope that Doyle and the rest of you were not affected seriously by the storm. It seems as if we have had all too many storms of the century in the last five to ten years. I look forward to seeing all of you at our Board meeting on March 1st!