

## **ODL Director's Report For the April 19, 2002 ODL Board Meeting**

Since our last ODL Board meeting was only five weeks ago, my report should be shorter than normal. Most of my time has been spent on budget and legislative concerns.

I did attend the Western Council of State Libraries and the Public Library Association meetings in Phoenix in mid-March. The meetings were very interesting and motivational. We hosted our first ever videoconference at ODL on March 22nd and I believe we were all pleased with how it turned out. I also was involved in the interviews for the Director of Library Technology held in March.

**Budget.** The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education invited ODL to present our proposed budget reductions to them on March 20th. Although not an enjoyable topic, it was a cordial meeting and I believe they listened to our concerns. The chair, Senator Hobson, told us that they would hold cuts to the lowest possible level.

We have been asked to make a presentation to the House Republican caucus about our budget cuts. This is a first for us and we hope to widen the understanding of our agency and the services we provide. Our meeting with members of the Republican caucus is scheduled for Monday, April 8th.

Rep. Mary Easley contacted us following the budget agreement between the House and the Senate. Our budget reduction will be 5% for FY03. I told Rep. Easley that we appreciated the difficult times they faced this year and that we would look forward to another year when we could try new initiatives and services.

**Legislative Concerns.** The main focus of legislative concern has been HJR 1048 that would lower property tax increases from 5% to 1% over the previous year. The eight public library systems in the state would be impacted dramatically by this change and they are very concerned about the passage of the bill. Representative Russ Roach from Tulsa is the primary sponsor of the bill and he held a Property Tax Summit on March 28th. Interested parties were invited to attend and discuss the bill. I attended along with representatives from the Tulsa and Oklahoma county library systems.

The library staff expressed their concerns to Representative Roach about their ability to meet their customers' demands for services in light of this funding change. Fixed costs of health care and building maintenance continue to go up each year and the libraries have been able to meet these rising expenses through the growth money under the current 5% cap without reducing services to their customers. The funding situation for library systems is worsened in some rural areas by declining property valuations as well as being at the maximum millage allowed under the Constitution.

Also present at the meeting were representatives from county government, common education, career tech, and the education coalition. Senator Penny Williams participated in the meeting as well. The bill was not heard in committee before the deadline so it appears to be dormant.

**Book Award Dinner.** One of my favorite events has come to be the Oklahoma Center for the Book Award Dinner. All of the elements of it are necessary. It is a formal event held in a beautiful setting. The importance of the awards is reflected in the care the participants take to honor the nominees. We take time to recognize achievement in the written and visual arts. We do it in a setting that reminds us of the benefits of civilization. The Petroleum Club after dark showcases the city. After the Book Award is finished, I feel a sense of having participated in something that matters. This year Clyde and Imogene Petete represented the ODL Board at the dinner. I hope that next year more of you will be able to join us for the ceremony.

**Meetings in Phoenix.** This is the year of Phoenix. The Mountain Plains Library Association met in Phoenix in December and in March two more library meetings were held there. The Western Council of State Libraries met prior to the Public Library Association. The Western Council is composed of state libraries west of the Mississippi River. I find the organization to be very helpful because of similar situations and concerns. All of the states represented were facing budget cuts, some severe.

One of the main topics was a continuing education plan for regional certification for librarians working in the Western Council states. Some of the states do not have accredited library schools and must rely on distance education programs or immigration from outside states to obtain trained staff. At the meeting I was elected to serve as secretary for the Western Council. The current president is the Hawaii state librarian and the vice-president/president-elect is the Wyoming state librarian. I look forward to serving in this capacity.

The Public Library Association was a delightful experience. The city was warm and beautiful and the programs were superb. I attended several programs on early childhood programs in libraries that I believe we can incorporate into our planning when the economy allows new programs. The exhibits were also outstanding. The conference meets every two years and the next meeting will be in Seattle in February 2004.

**Construction Grants.** This is the second year that ODL has been able to fund public library construction grants. We received a total of sixteen grants for a total amount of \$875,000. The total amount of funds available for the grants is \$150,000. We offered one grant for \$75,000, one for \$50,000, and one for \$25,000. The grants require a match from the local community. Although we wish more money were available to meet the need, I believe the construction funds are very important as seed grants.