

Oklahoma Department of Libraries
August 30, 2002 Board of Directors Meeting

Director's Report

The summer has flown by. The relatively cool summer has been a blessing. Most summers by this time I am irritable and tired. This year will be one I'm sure I will use to measure other summers. I hope your summer has been a good one as well.

One Book. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries, the Oklahoma Humanities Council, the Oklahoma Capitol Complex & Centennial Commemoration Commission, Let's Talk About It Oklahoma, the Tulsa City-County Library System and the Metropolitan Library System were all represented at the first meeting to discuss developing a One Book/One State project. The concept is to select a book or books that will be the focus of discussions in classrooms, book groups, and other settings throughout the state during the same time period. There are often author or scholar lectures about the book held in public forums or at bookstores or libraries. Anita May, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Humanities Council, approached ODL about working together on the project. The first meeting was a preliminary brainstorming session. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for August 29th. Additional participants to be invited to the August 29th meeting include curriculum coordinators at the State Department of Education, booksellers, OETA staff, Center for Poets & Writers staff, representatives from the Assembly of Community Arts Councils of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Heritage Association, and Tulsa Community College. The focus of the Oklahoma One Book project may be tied to the Centennial Celebration but the details will have to be worked out. I think it is an exciting opportunity for ODL to develop relationships with new organizations. The promotion of reading by Oklahomans is a natural priority for ODL.

New libraries. One of the most enjoyable activities I get to do is to visit public libraries that have been newly built or remodeled. My two most recent visits have been to remodeled libraries: Bixby and Cleveland. Both libraries are charming. The Bixby library is a branch of the Tulsa City-County Library System. It was constructed in the 1960s and is heavily used by the community. The updating focused on a Western theme in the decorating. Although the space gained was minimal, the remodeling made better use of the space and the new look was much appreciated. The Cleveland Public Library, on the other hand, is a restored 1930 public school building. The previous library location was a very small area within a municipal complex. The remodeling of the school building was challenging because it required compliance with Historic Preservation rules that are very strict. Now that the building is open, I believe the community is thrilled. The space is dramatically larger, open, and very attractive. Cleveland was one of the last federal Library Services and Construction Act Title II projects that we had pending so ODL staff were very interested in its completion.

Native American Library Services Grants. One of the things on my “to do” list for the last eighteen months has been to increase awareness among the Oklahoma tribal governments of the library grants available through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This is the source of our federal library funds. IMLS also has a program specifically designed for the tribes. At a conference in Washington, D.C., I was told by Terri Brown, the program officer for these grants, that many eligible tribes in Oklahoma were not applying for the grants. Ever since then, I have been looking for opportunities to publicize these grants. An opportunity presented itself this summer when I received an announcement of a meeting of the American Indian Council. The group graciously gave me a few moments of their meeting time to discuss the IMLS Native American Library Services Grants. I gave out some business cards and received an invitation to visit the Southwestern State University Campus in Weatherford to discuss the grants with Dr. Lessley Price. Dr. Price was planning a grant-writing workshop in the fall for area tribes and he plans to include information about the IMLS grants. Dr. Price has contacted Terri Brown, the IMLS program officer, who is planning on coming to Oklahoma in mid-November to participate in the workshop. The Native American Library Services grants do not pass through ODL. The tribes apply directly to IMLS, which awards the grants after their reviewers evaluate the applications. It is very satisfying to think that we have increased the opportunities for Oklahoma tribes to receive funding for important library and archival services through our outreach efforts.

Statistical grant. Another satisfying experience was being funded by the National Center for Educational Statistics for enhancements to the ODL annual report form. The grant was for \$3900 and will pay the costs of a consultant who will improve the annual report form. The consultant will completely migrate the form to the web, enhance the input features by adding self check features to prevent simple mathematical mistakes and online error messages that do not allow respondents to leave unanswered questions, solve data transfer failures from the report's Access files to the format required by the National Center for Educational Statistics, and provide the ability to print the entire report rather than the current page by page. This is the first time ODL had applied for this grant so it was wonderful to be funded. Cathy Van Hoy of the Office of Library Development and I collaborated on the grant application.

ODL Strategic Plan review. Vicki Sullivan, Joe McRee, ODL Business Manager, and I met with Nancy Tarr, the ODL Office of State Finance budget analyst, and Claudia San Pedro, State Senate fiscal staff, to discuss the ODL strategic plan submitted last year. We received the highest score of any agency in the education agencies. We were told that the entire plan was well organized and clear. Nancy Tarr did comment that our “Values and Behaviors” section lacked any statements specifically about customers. At the ODL Office Administrators meeting where I discussed this meeting, Bill Young commented that ODL is so customer centered that our Values and Behaviors assume that is the focus of our behavior. It is an important omission, however, so you will find the proposed amendments to the ODL strategic plan as an item for consideration for your action at the ODL Board meeting.