

## Director's Report

The time always seems to fly between Board meetings. This has been an unusually quiet but productive legislative session so far. The legislature passed an appropriation bill funding all agencies at last year's levels last month. Appropriation bills for individual agencies will make changes to the funding levels in some cases. We have not been contacted yet by either the House or Senate to make a presentation. If we do not receive additional funding, the state aid and public library construction funding levels will return to those of FY03. We were able to restore most of the state aid reduction in the FY04 budget by using carryover funds. Unfortunately, those were one time funds and will not be available next year. It is still our hope that the legislature will act to restore the funds directly benefiting their constituents. The other piece of good news is that the legislature appears to have worked out the details for a state employee pay raise. This will be much appreciated by ODL employees who deserve recognition for their intrepid commitment to continuing to deliver services to our customers in the face of uncertain budgets and staff vacancies.

**On the Road.** There have been several important events happening since our last Board meeting. I represented ODL at the Choctaw Library grand opening on February 11<sup>th</sup>. This new building is a branch of the Metropolitan Library System. The building was packed with local residents and well wishers to celebrate this welcome event. One of my favorite activities is to attend library openings because I know what it means to a community. I attended the Western Council of State Library Agencies spring meeting and the Public Library Association's national conference in Seattle at the end of February. It was a record setting attendance for the PLA conference and there were many good programs and speakers. One of the most moving events was the opening general session when Anna Quindlen and William Gates, Senior were speakers. Both were powerful in their affirmations of the importance of reading and libraries to their lives and the society as a whole.

**Oklahoma Library Association Legislative Day.** On March 9<sup>th</sup> almost 200 library trustees, FOLIO (statewide friends of library organization) members, and librarians held their annual legislative day. The theme this year was "Libraries Need Their Share of the Pie" and librarians invited their legislators and legislative staff to join them for a piece of apple, peach, or cherry pie. The response was very positive and the participants reported success in their contacts with legislators.

**Models of Library Service.** I made a presentation to the Pioneer Library System Board in March on the guidelines for excellence in public library service. Thanks to Ginny Dietrich who does the work, I present the Board with a comparison of their system's services to the benchmarks in the Models for Library Service document. It is a way to make an abstract document more meaningful by tying it to local services. I have made presentations to the Tulsa Library Commission and the Metropolitan Library System already. I am scheduled to make a presentation to the Eastern Oklahoma District Library System in July. Members of the Office of Library Development staff are also making

these presentations to the library boards of the communities they serve so we are focusing outreach efforts on educating the library trustees on this important issue. We believe these guidelines are of critical importance to library boards, city managers, and citizens.

**Library Construction Grants.** One of the most difficult and most rewarding grant programs in which I participate is the library construction grant program. Thanks to Representative Barbara Staggs, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries has funds to encourage local libraries to fund the renovation or new construction of library facilities. The amount is modest but it is highly valued by the libraries seeking the funding. This year we had eleven applications and awarded two grants so you can see how competitive the process is. This year the grants went to the Duncan Public Library and the Mounds Public Library. It was gratifying to be able to fund their very worthy applications. I'm only sorry we couldn't fund the rest as well because all of the communities applying had a significant need to improve their library facilities.

**Oklahoma Book Awards.** The Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book had a very successful event this year. Every year it seems to become more special and meaningful. A highlight for me was having Billie Letts recognized as the first Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma author for her book Honk and Holler Opening Soon. Billie autographed books and spoke briefly to the group as she drew a winner for the Literary Six Pack containing the nominees for the 2005 Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma book. Carolyn Hart's lifetime achievement award was so well deserved. I believe that the emotions of a group can be palpable and that night I felt so many people were supporting friends and families who were finalists that the room was filled with appreciation and celebration even for people we didn't know personally. The setting is dramatic with the lights of the metropolitan area adding as much as the table decorations to the ambiance. The presence of a Book Award winner who is a lady of immense style who would turn 100 years old the following morning also made the evening memorable. She brightened everyone's night by her sense of the occasion and the style with which she carried off the event. The hard work of the Friends of the Center for the Book Board as well as the Public Information Office at ODL made all of this flow smoothly.

**Media.** I did a radio interview with Steve Bennett of KRXO in early March. Anita May of the Oklahoma Humanities Council and I had given Steve an overview of the Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma project earlier. This time Donna Morris of the Metropolitan Library System and I spoke with Steve about summer reading programs, privacy issues of library patrons, and the new Ron Norrick Downtown Library in Oklahoma City. Steve does a program entitled "Focus on Oklahoma" which airs at 7 a.m. on Sunday mornings and the interviews will be part of that program. I believe these programs help make a select group aware of the many fine programs available to citizens in their libraries.

**Other meetings.** In the absence of an office administrator for our public library development division, I have been meeting with the staff at their Monday morning meetings. I am serving as the supervisor for the division until we fill the position. I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn more detail about the work of the division. We hope to interview candidates for the position in April.

Every year ODL provides a report to be included in the Oklahoma Library Association report to the membership. Bill Young attempts to capture in a brief amount of space the priorities, activities and environment of ODL in the preceding year. I am including it here because I think it is such a good overview of our work in the previous year.

**Oklahoma Department of Libraries  
2003 Annual Report  
Submitted for Oklahoma Library Association Annual Program**

The state library continued to struggle with the effects of budget reductions. By the time the two-year revenue drain had ceased by the end of calendar year 2003, ODL's state appropriation was down by almost 1.1 million dollars, or 15%. Vacancies in the agency stood at 11, more than 13% of the department's workforce.

Natural employee attrition through resignations and retirements, and strong budget monitoring kept the agency from having to implement any furloughs or RIFs (reductions in force) during the crisis.

A legislative mandate to protect federal dollars and services to the public meant much of the financial burden fell to ODL's divisions that offer special services to our state government customers: the Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library in the state capitol, which provides legislative and legal reference services, and the Office of Archives and Records, which assists state agencies with their records management needs.

Despite the focus on protecting public services, the heavy reductions could not prevent a 5.5% cut in state aid to public libraries and in public library construction grants. A fortuitous reimbursement from the State at the end of FY2003 allowed the agency to restore most of the state aid cuts for FY2004, but the full 5.5% cut will go into effect again unless new monies come from the legislature.

While the new budget reality squeezed services, partnerships with other organizations helped the agency begin some new programs and expand some services.

A partnership with the Oklahoma Library Association, the Metropolitan Library System, literacy organizations, and other libraries helped establish and grow OLA's new statewide literacy awareness campaign: Read Y'all ([www.readyall.org](http://www.readyall.org)). The campaign is coordinated by the OLA publicity committee. ODL also worked with this committee to develop a marketing plan for OLA and state libraries.

Partnership with the Oklahoma Humanities Council and 21 other organizations has established the first statewide reading and discussion program: Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma ([www.okreadsok.org](http://www.okreadsok.org)). Libraries and book clubs across the state will be reading and discussing Billie Letts' novel *The Honk and Holler Opening Soon* throughout 2004. State citizens will choose from six titles in the fall of 2004 to select the Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma book for 2005. The project is planned to last through 2007, the state's centennial year.

The Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB), coordinated by ODL's Office of Archives and Records, partnered with the Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA) and the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) to host three statewide forums to assist organizations that house archives and historic materials. The forums covered fundraising, public relations, and board development. Libraries and other non-

profit organizations also benefited from the forums. As calendar year 2004 began, ODL was notified it had received a grant from the National Historical Records Advisory Board to fund a Models of Archival Management program. Fifteen collections in the state will receive \$5,000 grants to implement local projects and practices.

OHRAB also partnered with OMA and OHS to sponsor the state's first Archives Week, November 9-16. This will become an annual commemoration to encourage state citizens to discover Oklahoma's historical resources.

ODL joined with other Oklahoma libraries in a pilot project to bring the Question Point virtual reference resource ([catalog.odl.state.ok.us/ask.htm](http://catalog.odl.state.ok.us/ask.htm)) to state citizens. Online patrons can ask reference questions via e-mail or real-time chat.

Enrollment in the agency's annual Summer Reading Program grew to more than 90,000 thanks to the popular dinosaur theme (Dig it! @ your library) and new sponsorships from the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, the Gelvin Foundation and Henry Zarrow. Continuing sponsorships from Sonic, The Oklahoman, and NewsOK.com also contributed to the successful summer program.

Grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded two projects: web development training for the state's librarians, and improved connectivity to the Internet for the state's public libraries. ODL combined the Gates connectivity grant with federal funds to upgrade libraries with 56k connections to T-1 broadband access and to furnish new routers.

Federal library funds were also used to help selected public libraries in the state with a new PR initiative: Presenting Your Library. During training, librarians learned to make professional presentations about library services to civic groups, city councils, schools, etc. The initiative also incorporated the use of technology, via computer laptops and PowerPoint software, to help librarians share information. The Presenting Your Library project was Oklahoma's model for outcomes-based evaluation during training in Washington, DC.

During 2003, the ODL/OLA Public Librarian Certification program certified the 500th Oklahoma library staff member. This milestone will be celebrated at the OLA Annual Conference. More than 500 public librarians are now certified. An article on the state's successful certification program was featured in 2003 in *Public Libraries* magazine.

Workshops for public library trustees in 2003 focused on two documents: *Models of Public Library Services* (developed by ODL and the Public Library Directors Council) and the *Youth Services Guidelines* (developed by the state's Youth Services Task Force). More than 140 trustees attended meetings where they learned how to use these documents to help improve library services in their communities.

In February of 2004, ODL said farewell to Donna Skvarla, who retired after nineteen years at the state library. Skvarla was administrator of the Office of Library Development for more than 15 years. Under her tenure, the Office worked to lead public libraries through the many changes that resulted from evolving technology, and to prepare librarians to meet the information challenges of the new century. Technology grants and training, the purchase of statewide information databases, and the establishment of the statewide librarian certification program were key tools in assisting libraries during this transition. Because of Skvarla's leadership and the work of her Office, Oklahoma's public libraries have evolved into globally-oriented institutions for

gathering information, incorporating the latest technological innovations in the information field to meet the needs of the state's library patrons.

Submitted by Bill Young