

Director's Report

Legislative Session. On May 28th, the Oklahoma legislature adjourned sine die until 2005. It was a memorable session because of the number and significance of issues addressed as well as being the last session for many lawmakers who are term limited. For ODL, it was a quiet session. The funding increases for ODL were limited to employee pay increases. All ODL employees received a pay increase that will take effect in January, 2005 and another increase that will take effect in July, 2005. On the agenda is possible action to increase my salary to implement the raise. The director's salary cap is set by the legislature with Board action necessary to make changes. Other ODL employees will automatically have their salary increased. While I welcome the salary increases for our staff, I was disappointed that our request to restore state aid funding grants to public libraries was not funded. This means that the state aid grants will return to the FY2003 levels which will be approximately 5.7% less than they are currently receiving.

Centennial project approved. The Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma project received approval by the Centennial Commission at their April meeting as an official Centennial project. I believe the statewide reach of the project as well as the collaboration by many different partners were recognized as being significant.

New staff. One of the exciting things we have been doing at the agency since the start of the calendar year is hiring staff. With the budget situation stabilized, we have been able to fill some key vacancies. I am pleased to announce that the position of Administrative Librarian for the Office of Library Development will be filled by Vicki Mohr. Vicki was a public library consultant at ODL for many years as well as having experience in private business and at the Pioneer Library System. Vicki began her appointment on June 7th. Another important position we have recently filled is the business manager. The current business manager, Joe McRee, will retire on July 1st. Kristi Hawkins, currently employed at ODL in the fiscal division, was selected to fill this position on June 2nd and will be training with Joe over the coming weeks to make a smooth transition to her new assignment. We currently have three other positions for which we are advertising so we are practically giddy with the possibilities of filling some of our vacancies. We will be introducing Vicki Mohr and Kristi Hawkins at the June Board meeting along with any other staff that has been hired in the meantime.

National Library Legislative Day. The first Monday and Tuesday of May has been the National Library Legislative Day. This year the Oklahoma delegation consisted of Anne Masters, chair of the Oklahoma Library Association's legislative committee and Assistant Director at the Pioneer Library System, Donna Morris, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Library System, Jayme Seat, school library media specialist from Jackson Elementary School in Norman, Jeanne Johnson, president-elect of the Oklahoma Library Association and director of the school library media division and instructional television at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and myself. In addition to the briefing sessions and visits to the Congressional offices, I attended the spring meeting of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA). It was a busy time in

Washington and we had a very cordial reception in our Congressional delegation. We were fortunate to meet with Congressman Cole personally. We had good discussions about the need to keep funding for libraries at the highest level possible and to balance the needs of consumers and producers of copyrighted material. I believe it was a very successful trip.

Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB). In previous meetings we had advised you about receiving funds from the National Historic Records Preservation Commission to re-grant to local historical societies, museums, and other organizations. In May, the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board met to review the grant applications for these monies. We had 30 applications to review and 15 grants to award. The meeting lasted from 9:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. I was pleased with the projects we were able to fund but disappointed that we couldn't fund more. In the division reports for Archives and Records, there is more detail about these grants.

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness. This group continues to be very active. It is a rare week when there isn't at least one committee meeting or meeting of the group as a whole. In May, former North Carolina governor Jim Hunt came to Oklahoma to promote the importance of early childhood education and care. Governor Hunt spoke to a joint session of the Oklahoma legislature and at a dinner at the governor's mansion. It was my first dinner at the pavilion on the grounds of the mansion and it was a lovely affair. First Lady Kim Henry has made a real commitment to this important endeavor. The legislature did approve \$2 million to fund this public-private partnership so the work begun with grants from the Bank of American and United Way Success by Six will continue and be expanded in communities in Oklahoma. ODL will be announcing a grant soon that will fund the purchase of early childhood materials for public libraries as well as training for public library staff on how to work with very young children, their parents and other caregivers. This latest grant will build on earlier grants and training to serve this important group.

Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. The Noble Foundation located in Ardmore has hosted a number of library oriented retreats thanks to the good work of Patrick Brennen, their librarian. It is a beautiful facility that promotes networking and relationship building. I have attended both the Oklahoma Library Association leadership retreat and the Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma (FOLIO) Board retreat this month. Hardship pay would not be appropriate for the opportunity to experience the warmth of the Noble Foundation's hospitality and the dedication of the library community and their Friends. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to participate in these positive environments.