

Director's Report
ODL Board of Directors Meeting of June 19, 2009

Oklahoma Legislative update. The first session of the 52nd Oklahoma legislature has finally adjourned. The session was dominated by funding issues and overall state agency budgets were reduced by 4-7%. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries, however, received only a \$300 reduction from our current fiscal year's funding. There are many to thank for this remarkable achievement: the chairs of the education appropriations committees in both houses, the governor, but our thanks go to the grassroots effort of so many public librarians who informed their legislators of the value of libraries to their community during hard times. Thanks to everyone who advocated for libraries!

Challenges, of course, still remain. Revenue collections were again down in May so all agencies will automatically receive 1 ¼ percent less funding this month. When the legislature is not in session, revenue reductions are applied across the board to all agencies. In addition rising costs for employee benefits and other mandated expenses mean we still have to reduce current funding levels in next year's budget. Compared to other state agencies, however, we will not have to reduce services to our customers. We are very appreciative of having a steady state budget.

National Library Legislative Day. Every year the American Library Association coordinates a day in Washington, D.C. when librarians from around the country visit the Capitol and call on their Congressional offices to inform staff of how federal policies affect libraries and the communities they serve. This year there were six from Oklahoma: Donna Morris, director of the Metropolitan Library System, Anne Masters and Lisa Wells from the Pioneer Library System, Jayme Seat from the Norman Public Schools, Jan Bryant from the Eastern Oklahoma District Library System, and myself. We all visited each office and talked about libraries. We asked the Oklahoma Congressional delegation to support a bill to permanently exempt libraries from the lead testing in books requirements as well as to fully fund the Library Services and Technology Act and the Improving Literacy through School Libraries. We also supported the importance of e-rate funding for libraries which pays for the ongoing costs of connecting to the Internet. Oklahoma is in the top ten states in the country for our level of high speed access to the Internet. This level of connectivity would not be possible without the e-rate funding. Other important initiatives include the Preserving America's Historical Record which would provide state based funding for regranting to historical societies, libraries, museums, and others to preserve and promote historical documents and records. The weather was beautiful in Washington which made everything easier. We returned tired but pleased with the reception we received and hopeful that the worthy issues we championed will be successful.