

Director's Report

Funding News. There is good news and bad news. The good news is that the federal funding for libraries (Library Services and Technology Act) has received a slight increase for the coming federal fiscal year. The increase is approximately \$1 million so when spread out over all the states, our increase will be modest but it is at least trending upwards. On the state side, however, the revenue picture is less positive. You may have read in the news that the August revenues for state agencies were reduced 5% because of revenue not meeting estimates. The process is that when revenues do not meet estimates, agency budgets are reduced uniformly so all agencies receive the same reduction. In our case, the reduction was approximately \$30,000. The reduction could have been 17% but the Office of State Finance used cash reserves and other funds to moderate the agency cuts. Forecasts by state economists seem to indicate that Oklahoma is expected to come out of the recession when the rest of the country does, now predicted to be in the third quarter of the year. Since we were late to the party, Oklahoma is fortunate to be arriving late and leaving with the rest. I spoke with the Michigan State Librarian recently and unemployment figures in Michigan are at 20%. Oklahoma's governor and legislative leadership are working together to address the revenue shortfalls as they arise. I expect that there will be more revenue constraints in the next few months and we will be looking to strategically reduce expenditures.

Broadband Connectivity. Connection to the Internet is as important to a library today as electricity and telephone service. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) also known as the stimulus package contains over \$7 billion in funding for projects to increase the availability and affordability of high speed connections to the Internet. Broadband is a term that means a high speed connection that allows graphics and large files to be downloaded much faster than a dial up connection. Many rural areas of the country have limited access to broadband and some urban areas have low subscribership because of cost. Libraries in Oklahoma already have higher bandwidth and wireless access than most of the country because of the priority placed by the Office of Library Development at ODL on ensuring that Oklahoma libraries participate in the

federal and state e-rate programs. These e-rate funds allow Oklahoma libraries to afford the costs of broadband connections.

The ARRA funds are a new source of funding for libraries and I have been attending presentations, participating in telephone conference calls and webinars on the topic. The first round of applications was to occur between July 14th and August 14th but the application period has been extended to August 20th. The State of Oklahoma is only submitting an application on mapping of broadband availability across the state in the first round. The State plans to submit additional applications in later rounds and I have been assured that Oklahoma libraries will be included. Plans are to provide at least a T-3 connection. For many of our rural libraries, this will be a significant increase which will allow them to better meet their customers' needs. Those who are applying in the first round have indicated considerable frustration over the focus on residential end users and the difficulty in completing some of the application because the information is not available. There are reasons to want to be on the cutting rather than the bleeding edge of some endeavors.

Staff Recognition. At this Board meeting we will have a number of service awards to present to ODL staff. The State of Oklahoma instituted this program several years ago to recognize the contributions made by the employees of each agency. The awards are issued in five year blocks and we will have an unusually large group to present at this meeting. ODL staff makes things happen. As you read the division reports which follow you can see all the ways that the creative talented energetic people at ODL are improving the lives of the people in Oklahoma. This presentation is an opportunity for us to celebrate the hard work and dedication of the ODL staff.