

Director's Report

Legislative Session. As I write this we are in the last two days of the legislative session. It has been a session focused on funding and a number of reform issues related to education. The budget reduction to ODL was 6% on top of the reduction in this fiscal year so our total budget reduction for SFY2011 will be 13.05% from our starting appropriation in SFY2010. We will have more information to share at our June Board meeting as to the impact of this reduction on ODL's services.

An unusual development in this year's legislative process was the voluntary buyout offer to current state employees eligible for retirement. If an individual employee is 62 with at least six years of service or if a combination of age and service met the full retirement standards, employees were eligible to apply for the voluntary buyout. In the buyout, an employee would receive a lump sum based on costs of health insurance, longevity, and other items. The offer is available on a first come, first serve basis. The expense of the buyout is being funded by the state but the agency cannot fill the position for three years. One ODL employee has been approved by the Office of State Finance for the buyout offer so far.

BTOP. The grant application on behalf of Oklahoma public libraries for the Broadband Stimulus funding is moving through the process. ODL was contacted on May 10th by a program officer at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration that our application had been selected for "due diligence" or grant review. The program officer was careful to let us know that moving into this stage did not mean that we were guaranteed to be funded. We received a list of 24 questions with multiple parts. We had a week to answer the questions. The ODL staff of Vicki Mohr, Judy Tirey, and Cathy Van Hoy in conjunction with the CSMG consulting firm that helped develop the grant worked long hours to develop the ODL response. We have had a second contact for more information but for only two questions this time. Some of the information requested was not clear so we contacted our program officer. In that conversation, she told us that ODL was the only applicant "in the history of the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP)" not to have to revise our budget narrative in this phase. What a tribute to the ODL and CSMG team! While we have not completed the due diligence phase, I know that you will be encouraged to hear how well our application is doing so far in the process.

On the Road. I attended a meeting in Seattle at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in May. The meeting was designed to inform and engage the Foundation's partners in their strategic planning for the next four years. The Foundation is shifting its focus away from direct grants to public libraries for technology. The focus in coming years will continue to be public access technology in public libraries but more emphasis will be given to policy development and dissemination of best practices. Represented at the meeting were the state librarians from California, Connecticut, Delaware, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as the executive director of the American Library Association, president of the Public Library Association, faculty from the University of Washington Information School and the University of Maryland School of Library and Information Studies, key staff from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, and many others. The discussions were lively and engaging. The leadership and support of the

Gates Foundation has been critical to Oklahoma public libraries. Their support during the BTOP application process is only the latest example of this.

Hello and Goodbye. One of the hardest things for me is when the term of service for an ODL Board member is completed. We have had such outstanding individuals selected to serve on our Board and while it is easy to say “thank you for a job well done,” it is hard to say “goodbye.” It is that time again, however, and this year it is our ODL Board Chair Ann Geurkink who will be completing her term. It has been a special joy to me to work with Ann during her time on our Board because she is from my hometown of Duncan. Ann demonstrated those qualities of dedication, common sense, and deep understanding of the value of public libraries that make our work as ODL staff possible. Thank you, Ann, for your leadership and service to the libraries in Oklahoma!

Our new Board member, Judy Haught from Elk City, was appointed by Governor Brad Henry and approved by the Oklahoma State Senate. I have contacted Judy with information about ODL and hope that she will be able to join us for our June 11th Board meeting.

In closing, I am including a fact sheet on the impact of libraries in the United States. It was developed from research done by a variety of organizations and compiled by OCLC, a library cooperative and vendor. It compares libraries and other entities in a way that may surprise you. We interact with individual libraries often but may not realize the cumulative impact of the services libraries provide until we see a document like this. I hope you will find it useful to sprinkle in your conversations and amaze your friends and acquaintances.

See you soon!