

Director's Report

The fall is always a busy time for the Oklahoma library community as this one has been. Since we last met, the Public Library Directors Council had their annual fall retreat in Norman on September 30th-October 1st. The group took advantage of the location to tour the University of Oklahoma campus Western History Collection, hear a presentation on the World Literature Today program, and tour the School of Library and Information Studies offices and classrooms. I presented a report on ODL activities and new laws that will affect Oklahoma libraries. I briefed the group on the reduction in state aid this year. On the second day, the group had an opportunity to participate in a Public Issues Forum and then move to the Norman Public Library where table talks on various topics were hosted by members of the Pioneer Library System. After lunch, the group adjourned until the next meeting in December. It is always good to get together and have more time to interact than our usual schedules allow.

The revenue picture for the state has improved from last year. Since March tax collections have met or exceeded the estimated amounts. This has meant no additional budget reductions for state agencies since the beginning of the fiscal year. In addition to informing the members of the Public Library Directors Council of the 10% reduction in state aid, I also sent an e-mail to all Oklahoma public libraries notifying them as well. The responses I received to this information were uniformly supportive. One of the action items on the agenda for Board action on December 3rd will be the state aid formula. There are three parts to the formula: minimum grants, mileage, and per capita. All three areas were reduced by 10% in the proposed formula. In addition, we are recommending that the initial payment to libraries be 90% of the total award. This allows ODL flexibility if revenue begins to fail to meet expectations.

Our meeting on December 3rd will be a busy one. In addition to a full agenda, there will be a Board retreat which will provide briefings by ODL staff on ODL services, sustainability, and stature. Some of the materials for the briefing are maps that attempt to visually illustrate the standing of Oklahoma's public libraries and the state library in terms of the region and the nation. I want to commend the Public Information Office and Bill Struby's work in preparing these items. It presents a great deal of information in a more usable form than just numbers on a page. I hope this information will lead to an excellent discussion for the Board retreat.

Much time and effort is going into the preparations for the BTOP Launch event to be held on December 9-10th. Thank all of you who are making a double commitment of time to attend both the December Board meeting and the Launch event. Your support is critical to our success at the event. We are very appreciative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funding for the event as we believe it will position us to achieve sustainability for the public libraries and for ODL.