

Director's Report

While it has only been a few short weeks since our last Board meeting, it has been a very active time for ODL staff and in the Oklahoma Legislature. Included in the packet is a list of bills affecting ODL, libraries, and library funding that we have been tracking. HB 1208 affects your service on the ODL Board. It includes the following language:

“In addition to any appointments created by expiring terms or vacancies provided by law, the Governor shall have the power, subject to the confirmation by the Senate, to appoint and replace any gubernatorial appointments on any board or commission.”

The bill passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives and will now be considered by the Oklahoma State Senate. Even if the bill passes as currently written, I am not sure if there will be an immediate impact. The time to identify individuals to serve on all the boards and commissions plus the time for the Senate to confirm all those individuals will be substantial. I would expect that the governor would prioritize the appointment of board or commission members according to her initiatives or the perceived need for change.

Also included in this packet is information concerning the adoption of a resolution that would approve the federal e-rate filings for the OkCONNECT project. This action is recommended by the consultants we used to help us file this complex and detailed application. As a result of their work, we anticipate we will have approximately \$700,000 additional funds in our OkCONNECT project to use to purchase equipment and reach more communities than our original application allowed. The use of this professional e-rate consulting firm provided a terrific return on the investment for their expertise. The grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was used to hire the Kellogg and Sovereign Consulting Firm, and I know they will be pleased that we were able to leverage their dollars in such an impressive way. The OkCONNECT team of Vicki Mohr, Judy Tirey, and Cathy Van Hoy deserve kudos for their concept of the value such a firm could provide, the follow through of developing a bid, getting an exemption from the Central Purchasing rules to fast track the bid process required in the federal e-rate process, and their hard work in partnering with the firm through every step in the process. Now we all need to keep our fingers crossed that the federal e-rate program approves our application in full.

This upcoming ODL Board meeting will be a milestone for me. It will be the tenth anniversary of my appointment to serve as the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The last ten years have been some of the most rewarding and challenging of my work life. The budget changes have been dramatic. During the time I have served as director, we have lost over \$900,000 in funding and have 33% fewer staff. Most other state libraries have faced similar or worse funding situations. My colleague in South Carolina stated recently that he began as the state librarian in 2007 and the budget has been reduced 46% during his tenure.

Our agency has weathered these challenges so well because of the quality of our staff. I want to take this opportunity to recognize the support system that has kept me functioning in these tough times. Vicki Sullivan, ODL Deputy Director, never seeks the limelight that she so richly deserves. She has juggled resources and suggested workarounds on a continuing basis during

these difficult times. Vicki has been a magician in pulling rabbits out of hats to allow us to continue to meet our mission with diminished resources.

Kristi Hawkins, ODL Business Manager, has risen to the challenge of new purchasing and financial software advertised to be more efficient but in reality often more time consuming than what it replaced while aiding Vicki in identifying cost savings and making suggestions on economies that helped our bottom line.

Karen Currie, executive assistant to the Director, mastered the new personnel management software not painlessly but without passing the pain on to anyone else. She has been my absolutely dependable home base when I'm out of the office always keeping me informed and making sure I hit the marks on time and where I'm supposed to be.

Bill Young has also been critical to my work life as well. No one is a better writer, more able to meet a deadline, or sees the "big picture" of the agency than Bill. Under short time lines and pressing need, he has developed talking points on difficult topics, helped brainstorm responses to a crisis, and made it look easy.

The partnership with the Oklahoma library community has been enormously important to the work of the last ten years. We are indeed fortunate in Oklahoma to have so many individuals from all sizes and types of libraries who work with ODL to improve the lives of all Oklahomans. There have been times of tension as well as times of celebration. No one of us could have achieved what all of us have achieved together. Thank you for your contributions to making Oklahoma a better place to live.

Thanks so much to the patience of the current and former ODL Board members as well. The contributions you and your predecessors have made to the policy options and directions of ODL have been profound. I needed your support and guidance and it has been abundant and unstinting. All of you have been contributing members of an important enterprise that has brought personal success, community engagement, and happiness to the people of Oklahoma.

I look forward with enthusiasm to the coming years. While I know the challenges will continue, I believe the rewards will as well. I count on all of you to stay engaged and part of our journey together. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Director. It is an honor and a privilege.