

Director's Report

This has been a hectic and productive fall. Several initiatives have moved from planning to implementation phase since we last met.

Digital Inclusion Forum. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was identified in the National Broadband Plan as the agency to work with libraries and community based organizations to broaden the number and depth of Americans participating in the economic, educational, and personal opportunities provided by the Internet and computer technology.

IMLS worked with many thought leaders in the library, technology, and nonprofit communities to develop a framework for communities to assess how well they were doing in reaching this objective. Once the framework was developed, IMLS then sought feedback and input from the public. Three communities—Los Angeles, CA, Oklahoma City, and Bangor, ME provided the first round of response to the principles. The state libraries in these three states worked with IMLS staff and contractors and the local host library to invite the right mix of individuals to critique the framework document. Two forums were held in each city. For more information about the events please see Bill Young's report to the Board later in this section.

I want to express my personal appreciation to Donna Morris, director of the Metropolitan Library System, and the staff of the Downtown Library and the Metropolitan Library System for their support of this initiative. More than just a host site for the events, the Metropolitan Library System was a true partner. Donna Morris helped develop the invitation list and her connections ensured that we had key members of the Oklahoma City power structure at the table participating in this discussion. Members of the Metropolitan Library Staff participated as note takers in the break out discussion sessions and were deeply engaged in listening to how to increase the participation in Oklahoma City in the online environment.

I believe the Digital Inclusion Forums were very successful in achieving national and local goals. I applied for the opportunity to host one of the Forums because I believe that Oklahomans have a lot to contribute to the national dialogue. Oklahoma is one of the top ten states for broadband connections to the Internet in public libraries but in the bottom 25% of states for Internet and broadband adoption by households.

Benchmarks for Public Access Technology in Public Libraries. As I have reported to you before, ODL and Oklahoma public libraries are involved in another major national initiative to develop a set of self-assessment tools for communities to evaluate their public access technology. Bill Young and I are part of a working group on the development of the benchmarks. A grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supports this work. There are monthly conference calls to discuss the benchmarks. The first drafts of the benchmarks are being released to targeted audiences for reaction.

I have been involved in some of those discussions. There was a focus group at the Oklahoma Public Library Directors Council fall retreat conducted by Samantha Becker of the University of Washington Information School. I made a short presentation at the Oklahoma Municipal League annual conference to a breakout session as part of our program on the OkConnect broadband

project. I also attended a pre-conference at the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) fall annual meeting to seventeen state librarians. Later in the COSLA meeting, I was part of a panel presentation on the initiative to the whole membership. The overall reaction has been positive and supportive of both the concept and the first drafts of the benchmarks. Feedback has been helpful to strengthen the first version of the benchmarks that will be tested in 2012 by a group of pilot site libraries.

Two Oklahoma libraries are pilot site libraries. The Miami Public Library and the Tulsa City-County Library are the pilot sites. In September the eight pilot sites participated in training by the International City County Management Association (ICMA) in Milwaukee. I attended the training to get a better understanding of what would be expected of the pilot sites so as to support the Oklahoma libraries. I also, as a member of the group developing the benchmarks, wanted to hear the reaction of libraries who would be utilizing these tools. The pilot sites were impressive for their commitment to the project and willingness to be on the bleeding edge. Our Oklahoma libraries were engaged and brought a great deal to the discussions. Miami will be in the first round of field testing the benchmarks which should occur in January.

As you can see from these two overlapping initiatives, ODL and the public libraries in Oklahoma are contributing to the shaping of the future of public libraries. There are many strong libraries in Oklahoma and it is rewarding to see the recognition of this on the national level.

Another important event in which I participated was a meeting hosted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on State Library Capacity Building. This event was in Seattle at the new Foundation headquarters. State librarians and their deputy directors were the audience. The Foundation has a strong connection with state libraries in implementing many initiatives over the years. The focus of the meeting was to identify ways that state libraries could share experiences and strategies that would help us deal with declining budgets and staff. There may be some collaborative efforts in developing messages and presentation of information that could be developed for use across state libraries. The Foundation will be our partners in this to develop some strategies and tools to improve the outcomes we are facing.

Board agenda items. One of the ways that ODL helps to support the programs and services our public libraries provide to their customers is the state aid grant program. This meeting is when the Board adopts the formula for those grants. The reduction in the ODL budget meant that state aid and literacy grants were reduced 9% this year. This is the second year that state aid funding has been reduced due to a reduction in the funds received by ODL from the state legislature.

You may think it's "déjà vu all over again" when you see the ODL Employee Handbook on the agenda for your consideration. Following our last meeting there was a concern as to the difference between the agenda item "Consideration and possible vote on ODL personnel policy manual" and the action to adopt the Employee Handbook. The agenda for our December 2nd meeting indicates the Board will consider adopting the Employee Handbook so that there will be an exact match and no confusion as to the document being approved by the Board. The document is the same and is not reprinted in this packet. The agenda item allows the Board to correct any confusion.

I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving and I look forward to seeing you soon.

