

Director's Report

Funding. With the start of the legislative session, it has been a busy period at ODL. Since the ODL Board last met, the governor released her Executive Budget recommendations. She recommended a level budget for ODL for next fiscal year with no changes in our current level of funding. Following this report I have included the agency information I provided for inclusion in the Executive Budget showing the many accomplishments of ODL during last year and our goals for the coming year. No appropriation bills have yet been introduced for the coming year. Until the legislature and governor decide on income tax changes, I do not expect to see any agency funding decisions to be made.

On the federal funding side, we received good news from the Institute of Museum and Library Services regarding federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE). Because federal funds have been reduced to states, we were advised that a similar amount of state funds would be removed from our required match. As a result, ODL will not have our funding cut for failing to meet the federal requirement this year and the amount we have to match in future years reduced as well. In addition we were advised on how to apply for a waiver for coming years if we fail to meet the MOE amounts due to losses in state revenue.

“Every Veteran Counts.” I am pleased to announce that ODL is working with Oklahoma Secretary of Veterans Affairs - Rita Aragon, Maj. Gen. (retired) to support her initiative to get those who have served in the military in all branches including the National Guard living in Oklahoma to go online and be counted. Secretary Aragon believes that the current count of Oklahoma veterans is significantly below the real numbers. Since funding follows numbers, improving the accuracy of Oklahomans eligible for veterans' benefits will provide much needed service to our Oklahoma heroes. Initially Secretary Aragon planned to have the online registration occur at Wal-Marts one Saturday a month with volunteers bringing in computers to staff the sites. Fortunately, public libraries were identified as a better alternative because they already had the equipment, Internet connection, trained staff, and were open more than one day a month to serve the public. Public service announcements on the project featuring public libraries as a sign up site have been produced by OETA and will be airing soon. Secretary Aragon is a delight to work with and her combination of humor and tenacity make her a force of nature. This is the first state initiative to count veterans and is being seen as a model for other states.

Early Literacy Task Force. The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness is forming an ad hoc committee on Early Literacy. There are many different programs and partners involved in helping children be ready to be successful when they start school. I am glad that the role of libraries will be represented in this new group whose first meeting will occur just before our next meeting. I am serving as co-chair of the group along with Teri Brecheen at State Department of

Education. Teri is the Executive Director of Literacy at SDE. The focus of the committee will be to improve the use of evidence-based programs and collaboration among groups serving families and young children.

Invitations. Included in this packet are invitations to two ODL sponsored events. The first event is the Read Across Oklahoma Day at the Oklahoma City zoo. This will be held on Tuesday, April 10th. It is a wonderful opportunity to allow young children to experience the zoo, meet an author, have books read to them, and learn to associate reading with adventure and fun. The featured author will be Ree Drummond who has just published her first children's book which will be distributed to the first 1000 people attending the event.

The Oklahoma Book Awards will be held on April 14th at the Jim Thorpe Museum and Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame. Books by Finalists for the various categories will be signing books before and after the event. Last year Judy Haught and her husband and Wally Turner were able to attend to represent the ODL Board. Oklahoma is recognized as having one of the best Book Awards of any of the state affiliates of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. It is a magical evening recognizing the quality of Oklahoma authors and books about Oklahoma.

I hope some or all of you will be able to attend one or both of the events. We encourage your participation and can reimburse you for mileage to travel to the event. If you live more than sixty miles from Oklahoma City we can also pay for your hotel room if you come early for the event at the zoo or stay over following the Book Awards.

Oklahoma Library Association meeting. The next ODL Board meeting will be held in conjunction with the Oklahoma Library Association annual conference. This is our only meeting not held at ODL or in the State Capitol complex. It is a great opportunity for Board members to hear and see some exciting programs and projects Oklahoma libraries are developing for their customers. It also provides an opportunity for Board members to interact with Oklahoma librarians to hear about their concerns and satisfaction with ODL services.

Hail and farewell. We recently had a long-time ODL staff member retire. Sharon Asher in our Acquisitions area of Technical Services retired at the beginning of March. Sharon is one of those quiet effective people who manage to get a tremendous amount of work done without any visible effort. She was organized, hard working, and unfailingly kind. There was never a piece of paper on her desk at the end of the day or an item out of place. She made all of our lives better without making a fuss. I am so pleased that she can now turn her powers for good to the enjoyment of life. Best wishes, Sharon!