

Director's Report

Since the Board last met, it has been a busy time for the ODL staff and me. In early September Michele Farrell, our federal program officer from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), made a site visit. During the time she was here she spoke with all lead officers for federal projects, reviewed documents and procedures, and visited some of the libraries who have been recipients of our Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants. Judy Tirey, our LSTA Coordinator, was Michele's main contact and constant companion during the visit. An in person site visit is extremely valuable to the state library staff and I am very appreciative that the limited travel funds for IMLS staff are being prioritized in this manner. Our last site visit was six years ago and there have been changes in leadership at IMLS plus new laws governing both LSTA and federal agencies in general that affect operations on the state level. Based on her recommendations, we will be instituting some changes in our procedures and organization.

Also on the IMLS front, the LSTA proposed projects will be presented for Board approval probably in February. We hope by that time to know more about the available funds. The IMLS proposed reduction in the current fiscal year is 8.2% but the final budget has not been decided. All federal agencies are currently operating under a continuing resolution that funds them at the level of the previous fiscal year. The continuing resolution is due to expire in March, 2013. Federal funding from IMLS has declined 13% over the past two years. The Oklahoma House of Representatives conducted an interim study on the topic of reduced federal funding in November. We were asked to provide information to Oklahoma House staff and to the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs on the amount of funding we receive and the impact on our agency if federal funding is reduced.

On the state level things are beginning to get organized for the start of next year's legislative session. We will have a completely new group of budget analysts with whom to work in the governor's, Senate, and House staffs. We met with all three of the new staff following our last Board meeting. It allowed us to present the same information to all three at the same time and for all of them to hear the questions and answers from the others. It was a very productive time and I think meeting like this gives us the opportunity to get to know each other before the short time lines and pressure cooker of the session come into play. We don't yet know who will be chairing the Education Appropriations committees but expect that will be announced shortly. Representative Lee Denney and Senator Jim Halligan have served in those positions for the last two legislatures. With term limits and a new Speaker of the House, change is to be expected.

One of the highlights of my year is the Public Library Directors Council (PLDC) retreat which is held in the fall of each year. This year it was held in Bartlesville. The program included presentations on the switch in K-12 education to the Common Core Curriculum and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

We also had a panel of Oklahoma library directors who have been involved with the Edge Initiative to develop benchmarks to drive continuous improvement in the delivery of equipment and services for public access technology to library customers. Oklahoma is well represented in this national effort since two of our libraries (Miami and Tulsa) are pilot sites for the beta version of the benchmarks, two of our library directors (Pioneer Library System and Southeastern Public Library System) are serving on advisory boards to provide feedback on the benchmarks and process, and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries is one of fourteen organizations that are partnering to develop the Edge initiative.

I was pleased to announce that Oklahoma public libraries will be involved in the soft launch of the first version of the Edge benchmarks. This will involve testing the online assessment tool, the training offered to participants, the supporting documents to interpret and present the results to library staff and stakeholders, etc. We expect this to occur in the first quarter of 2013 but dates are not yet announced. Oklahoma will be one of approximately seven states to be involved in the soft launch. Libraries in states involved in the soft launch will provide feedback on all aspects of the online tools and materials. The PLDC members are looking forward to this opportunity since future participation may involve fees to those who participate. I may know more details at the Board meeting since I will have just returned from an Edge Round table meeting of the partner organizations in Seattle.

The last part of the PLDC program was a conversation with two of the leading Oklahoma legislators in Oklahoma. Senator John Ford from Bartlesville is the Assistant Majority Floor Leader in the Oklahoma State Senate, current chair of the Education committee and the vice-chair of the Senate Education Appropriations Committee. Representative Earl Sears also from Bartlesville is the chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee. The legislators told us that they didn't have prepared remarks but wanted to open it up to questions and answers. We introduced ourselves and then had an opportunity to discuss their thoughts on the coming legislative session and answer their questions regarding services to our customers. To have this kind of open dialogue with these two legislative leaders was a rare opportunity and a tribute to the director of the Bartlesville library and current chair of the Public Library Directors Council, Joan Singleton.

Another recent informal legislative opportunity was Congressman James Lankford's District Open House that occurred earlier this month. The event was held in his Oklahoma City office and was packed. Having met with Congressman Lankford's district chief of staff in March, I knew how appreciated the Oklahoma Agencies, Boards, and Commissions publication is so I took some copies of the latest one with me. Michelle Altman from the Congressman's Washington office was there so I gave her two copies for that office and she told me that they are in the process of moving offices and she had just been thinking that she needed to get copies of the new publication for their new office. I also brought copies of the latest Read Y'all posters for their office. Thanks to Connie Armstrong, Bill Struby, and Bill Young in our public information office for their good work in creating these highly valued items. You have a fan base!

Included in your Board packet are proposed dates for our 2013 meetings. This year I have a couple of meeting dates proposed that fall outside our usual meeting pattern. For two of our meetings, we will need to meet either on a Thursday or on Friday afternoon instead of Friday morning due to prior meetings scheduled in our South Conference Room. Please check your calendars prior to the meeting so that we can select the days that will work for Board dates. We are required to file these meeting dates with the Oklahoma Secretary of State's office by December 15th of each year.