

Executive Director's Column

By Adam Wright, Executive Director, North Texas Library Partners.
January 2009

Happy New Year!

As we begin 2009, we no doubt have to wonder about what will happen to libraries during the upcoming year.

"While many establishments are begging for customers in this troubled economy, there's one place where business is thriving: the Sonoma County library. The check-out of materials is up more than 10 percent in the 13-branch library system for the first 11 months of the year compared with the same period in 2007, and more people are coming into the branches, library officials said."

- Press Democrat, http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20081221/NEWS/812210264/-1/WEATHER?Title= No_heading

"The top reasons people come to libraries to use computers are for K-12 education and job hunting," said Jim Rettig, president of the American Library Association. According to one study, a family of four saves as much as \$2500 a year by borrowing 10 items per month instead of buying."

- Parade Magazine, <http://www.parade.com/news/intelligence-report/archive/libraries-facing-closures-and-cuts.html>

"North Providence's librarian, Mary Ellen Hardiman, says that Paupst is far from alone. She and other librarians report that people are flocking to libraries in ways that haven't been seen in years, drawn by the realization that it can help save them money and show them how to do things they couldn't do on their own."

- The Providence Journal, http://www.projo.com/ri/eastprovidence/content/library_users_12-14-08_04CJJP6_v24.3907ec6.html

The three quotes above are just a few of the many articles and news stories on how the public library is busier than ever, but instead of receiving funds to help offset this increased use, libraries are facing cuts and reductions.

We all know the reason why we are seeing such an explosion in library usage: the recession. All of us have experienced it. When the economy goes sour, individuals cut back and look for ways to take further advantage of services available to them, including the library.

Here at the North Texas Library Partners (NTLP), we have heard stories about how more and more individuals are looking to the library for job hunting advice and resources. People who cannot afford to go to the movies instead go to the

library to rent a DVD or video. Book circulation, of course, also goes up in times like we are experiencing right now.

How do libraries get the support they need to survive busy times with no additional resources? I personally believe now is the time to come together and support each other. I can think of no better justification for libraries to take an active role in regional and state organizations than to get help with the turbulent year we are facing. Regional organizations are a great way for libraries to pool their resources and share their experiences and expertise. After all, regional organizations have a built-in network.

Last year, here at NTLP, we saw some of this support starting to flourish. Thirteen libraries, calling themselves the North Texas Library Consortium, came together to share their resources through a shared Integrated Library System. As you read this column, these libraries are putting the final touches on the project that will begin in February and go live in August. NTLC saw a way to pool their resources to offer better services to their communities and these libraries jumped at the opportunity. Two other consortiums came together to offer online tutoring services, Live Homework Help, and downloadable audio books, Overdrive. All made available because these libraries took advantage of the inherent benefits available to members of any regional organization.

We also saw the creation of a partnership between the Texas Library Association's District 7 and NTLP to create some Special Interest Groups. The four groups were created by District 7 while NTLP provides the administrative and technical support. Three conferences were held last year with four on the horizon for this year. What makes this arrangement especially valuable is that librarians from multiple library settings came to network together at the conferences. We had school, public and academic librarians come together to share and learn.

NTLP has heard the plea of the libraries for more assistance and we are working on some programs and services to help libraries ride out these tough times. We are working on a program to assist libraries with job searching and career services. We also continue to research how we can pool our funds to get more "bang for our buck." I will write about these new programs as they are developed.

Despite the dreary predictions for the upcoming year, I do want to wish everyone best of luck and good tidings. Let's show to the rest of the world how libraries can rise to the challenge.

Now, here are some of the more interesting developments at NTLP. (Do not forget to take a look around ntrl.org at our January theme, Valuing Your Library. We have TLA President-Elect interviewed in our Librarian Live Episode and an

article written by Joanne P. Roukens, Executive Director of the Highlands Regional Library Cooperative in Denville, New Jersey.)

January Workshops

- Reader's Advisory, Part I, 1/16/2009, Denton Public Library - North
- Managing Across Generations, 1/22/2009, Colleyville Public Library

Special Interest Groups & Conferences

- LibrarySupportersNetwork SIG
 - The website went live this month; the discussion list has 27 subscribers.
 - The Conference Planning Committee met Dec. 2 and not only was able to confirm most of the conference session topics and speakers but also created a working schedule for the day, determining which topics would be presented at which times. As a result, we were able to include an almost finalized listing of sessions, speakers and session times on the website as soon as it went live. The conference will be held Saturday, January 31st in Fort Worth.

Serving Patrons with Special Needs Program

- Applications and guidelines for the funding assistance available to member libraries and their library partners were posted to the NTLP website and library directors notified of that fact earlier this month. Several questions were fielded immediately afterward, and a few library directors indicated they will work toward qualifying to apply.
- Staff and members of the Extended Accessibility Advisory Council continue development of the Toolkit for Developing and Implementing Accessibility Fairs.
- Two members of the Advisory Council visited our office this month to coordinate Toolkit workshop plans with the two Special Needs workshops Carolyn is arranging. Mary Jo Venetis will present *From the Law to Accessibility* Friday March 6 at Flower Mound PL and *Special Needs, Special Programs* at the NTLP Office Thursday April 9. Between those two workshops, Carolyn will present the Toolkit workshops on Wednesday March 18 and Friday March 20. Those workshops will include an overview of the Extended Accessibility Program and training on Toolkit use as well as hands-on time with the Universal Access station.
- At least four librarians attended demonstrations of the Universal Access workstation in December. In addition to learning more about technology options for universal access, the benefits of attending a demonstration

seem to include eye-opening first-hand experience with the daily challenges of people with limited vision or hearing. Also, librarians with experience in serving children, non-English speakers and people with low literacy levels are coming up with interesting ways to use the software with members of those groups.

Consulting

Region 1

New Director Orientation - Paducah

Region 2

- dona weisman and Carolyn Davidson Brewer visited with Jacksboro PL and its director, Lanora Joslin, regarding programming possibilities and space available for it. The person responsible for their children's services will contact me about summer programs for both teens and children.
- Bowie Public Library – Through the TANG program, the IT Specialist reconfigured the entire network so that it is correctly behind a firewall and protected from hackers. He wiped all computers after backing up all data, and rebuilt the way the network was physically hooked into each other.

Region 3

Denton - programming

Region 7

Stephenville – Discuss potential grant opportunity

Dublin – Discuss inventory needs

On NTRLS.org

- Kept NTRLS.org website current
- Added pages for Librarians' Gift Picks and NTLP-TV
- Enhanced display for the Directory of Library Program Presenters
- Enhanced the PayPal payment page to allow paying for more than one workshop at once

Regional Conferences, SIGs and Listservs

- Website support for the LP3 and Library Supporters conferences
- Continued work on Library Technology special interest group website
- Assisted at LP3 conference
- Attended meeting for Library Supporters Conference; worked on presentation for the conference
- Added support for conference exhibitors to pay with PayPal.

Plinkit

- Assisted 16 libraries with Plinkit sites and other website-related issues
- East Parker County's new Plinkit website is now live.
- Assisted TSLAC with moving our first-generation Plinkit sites to their new server
- Visited Justin and Krum for one-on-one training

General

- Worked on setting up new hosting service for Librarian Live podcast
- Participated in meetings for Enhanced Accessibility program and posted new information on NTRLS.org
- Regular updates to Overdrive barcodes for Keller, Saginaw, the Colony, Wichita Falls, and Benbrook
- Attended Services Planning Committee meeting
- General tech support to NTRLS staff

Specific Libraries & Regions Served by Technology Consultant

<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>
Aledo	6	Plinkit
Benbrook	6	Overdrive, Plinkit
Bowie	2	Plinkit
Dublin	7	Plinkit
Henrietta	1	Plinkit
Jacksboro	2	Plinkit
Justin	3	Plinkit
Keller	4	Overdrive
Kennedale	5	Plinkit
Krum	3	Plinkit
Lake Cities	3	Plinkit
Mineral Wells	6	Plinkit
Saginaw	4	Overdrive
Sanger	3	Plinkit
Seymour	1	Plinkit
Springtown	6	Plinkit
The Colony	3	Overdrive, Plinkit
Wichita Falls	1	Overdrive
Venus	7	Plinkit
TSLAC	-	Plinkit