

Executive Director's Column

By Adam Wright, Executive Director, NTRLS

March 2008

Happy March!

This month, our website theme is "Gaming in Libraries". We have an [article](#) by Paul W. Earp, co-author of [Securing Library Technology: A How-To-Do-It Manual](#), in which he offers his viewpoints on gaming in libraries. He also gives us a few hints on how to conduct a gaming tournament. Eli Neiburger, author of [Gamers ... in the Library?!: The Why, What, and How of Videogame Tournaments for All Ages](#), is going to be presenting [workshops](#) for NTRLS this month. If you want to get a taste of what those workshops are going to be about, listen to our [Librarian Live Podcast](#), where Lynn Gritta interviews Eli. You will need to sign up for these workshops if you are interested in learning about gaming tournaments in your library.

I have always been a fan of video games and have listened with interest to speakers who have proclaimed that online games are the next big thing for libraries. They offer both recreational and educational benefits associated with video games. Yes, you read right: the educational benefits. I had my doubts as well until my six-year son learned to read on his own last summer. I asked him why he tried so hard to learn to read. He told me, "So I could know how to play the video games."

After he told me that, I decided to conduct research to see if there had been any studies about the ties between literacy and video games. I did find one study done in Canada and the results seem to agree with what the experts have been telling us about the importance of video games to the younger generation.

"Researchers at the University of Victoria followed a group of boys, ages 11 to 16, for 19 weeks at a video game design camp tasked with teaching younger boys how to create their own game. They concluded that even though girls consistently outscore boys on school standardized tests for reading and writing, the boys exhibited high level literacy skills while engaged in a leisure activity often blamed for instilling negative values.

(<http://www.canada.com/vancouver/sun/news/story.html?id=d91eb782-4169-4a6b-ad09-1868d2a2783b&k=27487>)"

The article went on to say that our educational systems are ignoring this innovative way of learning. I believe some thought should be given to how best teach younger generations using alternative tools. I also believe that libraries are well positioned to look at utilizing video games to take advantage of this new way of learning. Be innovative! Host a gaming tournament in your library and I believe you will be pleasantly surprised.

Other news and notes:

March Workshops

- [Disaster Planning for Your Library](#), 3/4/2008, Crowley Public Library
- [Leave No Patron Behind!](#), 3/7/2008, System Office
- [Gaming in the Library](#), 3/13/2008, Lewisville Public Library

- [Gaming in the Library](#), 3/14/2008, Arlington Public Library, Central Location
- [Creating a Library Business Plan](#), 3/20/2008, System Office
- [Grant Writing: An Interactive Workshop](#), 3/20/2008, System Office

Shared Integrated Library System (SILS)

The SILS member libraries met on February 20th to introduce the project to potential members as well as start the long process of establishing policies and procedures. Three potential members were present at the meeting. A majority of the meeting was devoted to circulation policies which were discussed at length. Time demanded that the discussion had to be tabled until the next meeting on April 2nd from 2 to 4 p.m. at the System office. The consortium members will also consider a governance policy at the next meeting. For more information concerning this project, please go to www.ntrls.org.

NTRLS @ Your Library

And the winner is....Roanoke Public Library. The NTRLS staff will take a trip to Roanoke on March 12th to help them out with several projects.

Federal and State News

There is some news from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission that greatly affects what NTRLS will be allowed to do with our TSLAC funding. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) released a memo giving further guidance on “allowable costs.” As a reminder, TSLAC funds Systems through the federal funds it receives from the IMLS. Here is a summary of the IMLS guidelines:

Seeking Grants – NTRLS can no longer write grant proposals on System Grant time. This means that NTRLS staff will not be allowed to write grants of any sort during its normal business hours. It cannot utilize any grant resources including equipment, staff or office space for this purpose. TSLAC is attempting to get further clarification on this guidance so hopefully it will not be as strict as the memo seems to indicate.

Construction – NTRLS can no longer do anything connected to library construction including consulting and continuing education.

Continuing Education and Consulting – NTRLS is restricted to only activities that directly support the IMLS goals for its State program, which is called LSTA. NTRLS will be required to clear all CE workshops with TSLAC to ensure that they follow LSTA guidelines. If you are familiar with the LSTA priorities, you know that they are broad so we are not too concerned about this restricting what we can offer in CE and consulting.

Staff documentation – I am now required to sign a document certifying that System Staff worked on the projects outlined on our timesheets.

TSLAC also informed System Coordinators that our FY 2009 System Grants will be much smaller than anticipated. NTRLS is looking at \$489,000 in FY2009 instead of the anticipated

\$536,000. We will have to make some difficult decisions to help compensate for this sudden loss of over \$50,000.

I would like to end my column by stating that NTRLS will be reviewing its business practices very closely in the next month. I will be working with NTRLS staff to determine communication backups in the case where both the Executive Director and Assistant Director are out of the office due to health. This happened the last week in February when Carolyn and I were both out with the flu. With a smaller staff, some procedures need to be established. I will make this business plan available for review by interested parties.

And yes, I did get a Flu shot this year.