

## **Executive Director's Column: Notes from a Binge Thinker**

By Adam Wright, Executive Director, North Texas Library Partners  
February, 2010

Happy February!

I hope everyone has a wonderful Valentine's Day. My wife and I will be celebrating our 12<sup>th</sup> one together at the upcoming Supporter's Conference. This one-of-a-kind event will start Friday night, Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> and extend into Saturday, Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>. I am looking forward to spending some quality time with my wife, who I still love as much now as I did when we first celebrated Valentine's Day together. For more information on the conference, please go to <http://www.librarysupportersnetwork.com/conferencenews.html>.

This month, our website's theme is Supporting Your Support Staff. Our podcast this month features Caroline Morrow, Circulation Clerk at the Flower Mound Public Library on some of the ways the library management shows appreciation and provides a supportive environment for the staff. Our featured article is written by Steve Standefer, Director of the Mansfield Public Library, on supervisory techniques that help create a healthy, happy library staff organization

For my identity crisis series, I focused on the following question: Reference, do we keep it?

I sent some questions to my favorite listservs and received some great responses. Most responses stated that reference did have a future in libraries, but it was going to be a very different one. Almost all the responses stated the same basic feeling about the future of reference, that it will be available in some shape or form.

"There is a future. It's just a different future. Reference staff may lose most of their role searching for and doling out quick facts. It opens an opportunity to offer more in depth reference service because the librarian's time will not need to be spread so thinly. Our facilities and staffing will need to reflect this shift." Steve Benson, Richardson Public Library director, wrote in an email.

One question I asked was what the future held for the role of the librarian as the "information expert." Joan L. Sveinsson, Director of The Colony Public Library, wrote in reply to this question that she is "not sure that our customers ever really thought of us as 'information experts' -- I think they saw us as knowledgeable guides and helpers to assist them in their search for information and materials -- with varying degrees of appreciation. Some still want that personal guide; others come to us as a last resort when they cannot find what they need/want (and I don't think that is new or different!)." Joan went on to write that she felt strongly, like Steve, that reference will need to evolve to provide more in-depth answers to

those not able to find what they need through Google. She also mentioned the role of the library as an educator and place for local information.

One interesting point that several librarians made to me was that most patrons will not pay the high costs of the reference sources provided by libraries. If the patrons cannot find the material anywhere else, they will still need to go to a library to find the information, because the library is the only institution in the community that will have the funds available to provide the database/reference book. It levels the playing field for so many community members who would be denied the information otherwise.

What about the future skill sets of librarians providing reference? Steve stated it very nicely in his email. "Librarians need to become more skilled in their roles. It will no longer be adequate to respond to reference questions with simple, almost directional type answers. The public can get a simple, satisfying answer by themselves. We need to go beyond simple familiarity with information resources such as databases and be true experts in selecting, using, and instructing. Librarians need to create special value in our responses to questions or the public will stop asking. This returns to the concept of offering opportunity for in-depth services - consultation, assistance in output preparation (reports, plans, etc). Show our value in information services and we remain relevant and useful."

Of course, there are some librarians who feel strongly about the traditional reference role. "Well, for starters, I still want to encourage patrons, both young and old, to look in a book, to read through the book. Second, teachers and professors still require students to site materials from books; they can't all just use online materials. In short, my vote is to keep the reference section. I'm certainly not against technology; I happen to love it. However, I'm not so quick to throw out all the books and turn my library into a technological library like something from Star Wars (to which I am also a huge fan). I still vote yes for books!" Stacey Rogers, director of the Justin Community Library, wrote to me.

To be honest, I was surprised by how many individuals thought reference would still be a part of the library in this decade. I certainly do not. At least not in its current form of having a reference desk staffed with individuals to answer patron's information requests. I am also not sold on the idea that libraries will be able to provide advanced reference services. In my opinion, most people do not realize that the information available on the Internet is not the best, and even if they did, most would settle for "good enough" versus best available. Only a select few would realize the value that a trained information professional can provide to a community.

Instead, I firmly believe that a library has a role as information literacy provider. Libraries need to focus on teaching people what is credible, worthy information versus so much of the trash you can find online today. People need to be taught

how to overcome the information overload and find good relevant information. This I believe is where reference is headed.

Next month, I will be looking at the library's role as the great equalizer. Is this a library's greatest value in a community?

Now here are some things happening around the System.

### **February Workshops**

Register for these workshops at <http://www.ntrls.org/ce/>. If the course is full, let us know if you want to be put on a waiting list.

- **Friday Night Kick-Off for North Texas Conference for Library Supporters** , 2/12/2010, Courtyard by Marriott, Fort Worth
- **North Texas Conference for Library Supporters**, 2/13/2010, Lockheed Martin Recreation Area
- **Workforce Solutions and Libraries: Partners in Online Job Searches**, 2/17/2010, Fort Worth Library - Central Location
- **Summer Reading Program**, 2/18/2010, Hurst Public Library
- **Babygarten**, 2/25/2010, North Richland Hills Public Library
- **Babygarten**, 2/26/2010, Decatur Public Library

### **Consulting**

Here are some consulting activities that took place in November.

#### **Region 1**

**New Director Orientation** – Paducah

#### **Region 2**

**Branch Image Audits continued** – Arlington

#### **Region 3**

**Library Development Ideas** – Lake Cities

#### **Region 6**

**Mission Statement and Plan for Branches** - Fort Worth Library – SW Regional

**Site visits** – FWL – Meadowbrook and East Regional

#### **Misc/Activity:**

- Attended webinar on Future of Libraries with TSLAC.
- Attended webinar on Google's Hidden Libraries.
- Met with Terry Woodfin for the Don't Forget to Feed Me Pet Campaign – coordinating three libraries with program.
- SYNG – have scheduled classes and developed curriculum for the Texas Workskills Development for Libraries Program.
- Coordinated 15 Certified Public Library Administrators scholarships and registrations for courses beginning in Feb 2010.
- Supporters Conference
- TANO
- System Assembly Meeting
- CE Survey Committee

### **Website and Internet Support for NTRLS Programs and Services**

- Regular updates to NTRLS.org website.
- Website and other support for Library Supporters conference.
- Administration for NTRLS-supported listservs.

### **Plinkit**

- Updated 20 sites with configuration changes related to Plinkit 2.0 migration.
- Assistance to projects at 6 libraries.
- Assisted with creation of new site for Paducah.
- Trained 1 librarian in Plinkit content management .
- Trained librarians at 6 libraries in various aspects of Plinkit.

### **North Texas Library Consortium (Evergreen)**

- Technical and administrative support for North Texas Library Consortium project.
- Changed Evergreen configuration to allow hold requests to move across library boundaries for full-scale resource sharing within consortium.
- Handled and/or tracked 42 support issues, including 23 tickets with vendor's tech support.
- Continued administrative assistance for adding Justin Library to consortium

### **General**

- Support for Librarian Live project.
- Regular updates to Overdrive barcodes for participating libraries in Overdrive Consortium.
- Attended 2 training sessions on how to use Linux.
- Assisted with projects in Krum for NTRLS @ Your Library.

### Libraries Served by the Technology Consultant

<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>
Aledo	6	Plinkit	Krum	3	NTLC, Plinkit
Alvarado	7	NTLC	Lake Cities	3	NTLC, Plinkit
Aubrey	3	NTLC	Mineral Wells	6	NTLC, Plinkit
Benbrook	6	Plinkit	Paducah	1	Plinkit
Bowie	2	Plinkit	Pilot Point	3	Plinkit
Bridgeport	2	NTLC	Ponder	3	NTLC
Burkburnett	1	Plinkit	Roanoke	3	NTLC
Burleson	7	Overdrive	Saginaw	4	Overdrive, NTLC
Chico	2	Plinkit	Sanger	3	NTLC, Plinkit
Crowley	5	NTLC	Seymour	1	Plinkit
Decatur	2	NTLC	Springtown	6	Plinkit
Dublin	7	Plinkit	The Colony	3	Overdrive, Plinkit
Electra	1	Plinkit	Venus	7	Plinkit
Forest Hill	5	Plinkit	Wichita Falls	1	Overdrive
Justin	3	NTLC, Plinkit			
Kennedale	5	NTLC, Plinkit			
Keller	4	Overdrive			

### Special Interest Groups & Conferences

- LibrarySupportersNetwork SIG <http://www.librarysupportersnetwork.com>  
Registration continues for The Future of Libraries, *the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual North Texas Conference for Library Supporters*, set for Sat. Feb. 13, 2010 at the Lockheed Martin Recreation Area, and the Fri. Feb. 12 kick-off event.
- Dates and locations for the next four NTLP/TLA conferences have been set. CYC 2010 will be Thursday August 5 at the Lockheed Martin Recreation Area, which has been used for all conferences to date. The Decatur Civic Center will be the location of the other three conferences, on the following dates: TechNet 2010: Friday May 14, LP3 2010: Friday Nov. 12, and Library Supporters 2011: Saturday Feb. 19.  
<http://www.deaturciviccenter.com/map.htm>

### Expanding Accessibility Program

- As part of this year's grant program, Amigos Consultant, Christine Peterson will review the web presence of eight member libraries and meet with staff at each library to discuss ways to make each presence more

universally accessible. The eight libraries Ms. Peterson will be working with are Alvarado, Denton, Fort Worth, Jacksboro, Krum, Little Elm, Richland Hills and Sanger.

- Hands-On workshops, designed to teach universally accessible web design is scheduled for Denton's North Branch and Fort Worth's downtown library on Thursday, June 10 and Friday, June 11 respectively. Roanoke Public Library Director, Jesse Ephraim will be the instructor for the all-day trainings.
- Karen Williams of REACH, Inc. of Fort Worth and retired librarian Karen Risser will present two one-day workshops in April, providing training relative to Special Needs sensitivity, first-hand information on problems for wheelchair users and services available to people who have disabilities or special needs.
- Accessibility Program Coordinator dona weisman and Krum Public Library volunteer librarian Laura Klenke spoke at the January meeting of the Denton County Library Advisory Board, explaining the 2008 Expanding Accessibility program and its results, with focus on KPL as an example of the pilot project libraries. The presentation was followed by hands-on demonstrations of many of the accessibility tools which Krum's library acquired within the program.
- NTLF participated in Fort Worth Library's *Accessibility Fair* Sat. Jan. 23; 2010; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Participation resulted in several good contacts and possibly the beginning of another partnership.
- Colleyville Public Library has set the date and time for its *Accessibility Fair* as Saturday March 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## **Libraries for Literacy**

For more information on these projects, please visit our website at <http://www.libraries4literacy.org>.

- Accepted applications for LearningExpress Library Consortium Grant.
- Worked with Chris Jowaisas on establishing a Single Sign On service for Libraries for Literacy and the TSLAC Moodle web sites.
- Began the process of setting up online classes using the TSLAC Moodle site.

## **TSLAC News**

At a recent meeting of the Library Systems Advisory Board, the following was on a memo about TSLAC news.

*Agency budget for the 2010 & 2011 biennium*

*The agency received a letter on January 15, 2010 from the state leadership directing it (and all agencies) to review all planned expenditures for the remainder of the biennium and submit a plan identifying savings in priority increments totaling 5 percent of the agency's general revenue and general revenue-dedicated for the biennium. For the agency, this totals approximately \$2,050,000. The plan is due February 15, 2010. We are asked to minimize the impact on direct services, although we do not have close to that amount of funds outside of direct services.*

What this means for the Systems program is still unclear, but we should know more later this month.