

Executive Director's Column: Notes from a Binge Thinker

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

Happy March!

This month, our website's theme takes on a technology slant as we compare Microsoft Office, Open Office and Google Docs. For our podcast, Carolyn Brewer discusses the three applications and what three local techies use in their own lives. For our guest column this month, we have reprinted a blog post from Ken Stewart, owner of the blog Changeforge, a blog looking at the intersection of business and technology. His blog post asks the simple question, "Why do you still use Microsoft?"

For my identity crisis series, I focused on the library's role as the great equalizer. The library's greatest value-add? Just as a reminder, I am focusing on the role of the public library in the next decade. Each month I tackle a different role the library plays and how it might change.

As I have done in the past months, I sent a series of questions to some of my favorite listservs to ask for input on how the role of the library as the great equalizer will change in the future.

"If the library doesn't fill this role, it won't be filled." Judy Daniluk wrote in response to my questions. Judy is NTLP's technology consultant "Private enterprise won't provide services unless there's a profit advantage, so they won't offer services to populations that can't pay or geographical areas that are costly to reach. For services that our society considers essential, tax dollars and government support have to help reach these populations and areas. That's why the government subsidizes telephone service to remote areas, and that's why they're trying to improve broadband coverage."

Is this role the most important one a library can play in a community? Most of the responses I received said it was an important role, but just one of them. "I think that depends on the community. In Coppell which is a fairly affluent community, I do not think it's our greatest role. One that I like to tout here is the library is a "community gathering place". Folks seem to get the "support of the curriculum", popular reading etc., but this community likes to visit. We have many new arrivals - primarily from Asia and the Subcontinent. They are big library users." Kathy Edwards, Director of the Coppell Public Library wrote to me.

Lara Strother, Director of the Lake Worth Public Library, did believe this was the greatest value a library can bring to a community. "I think so, yes. Who else can do what we do with a smile and for free?" She wrote to me and continued about how the profession needs to be prepared, "We just need to continue to think in terms of what does MY community need? There's definitely a big picture view

when it comes to the future of our profession, but there's also a small picture view that I think matters even more. I feel connected to the people who visit my library, and I come to work everyday to meet their needs. What I'm trying to say is, I feel it's important to be involved with my own personal community of library users, both within the library and without. There is no other way to prepare for changes"

When it comes to how do you balance services between the "haves" and the "have-nots" Many of the responses focused on providing services that appeal to both sectors. At the same time, there seemed to be an understanding among the responders that some library services just won't appeal to everyone so you have to match the needs of the various sectors of your community. "I also see libraries as a whole providing more for all segments of society. Attracting the "haves" to the library is always going to be a challenge - they can buy the book (and then donate it to the library), they go see the movie, rent it from the nearby video store or download it from the internet to their TV or computer. But, we also offer a chance to talk with others who also enjoy reading a book, or discussing a movie. People are social creatures and that is another aspect libraries can offer to people - a place to visit with others. I suspect that most of the moms that attend story-times do so more as a chance to meet other moms than for the child to become a better reader." Donna Pierce, director of the Krum Public Library wrote to me in an email.

From my standpoint, I think libraries will need to continue to keep this role high on the priority list, but, as Donna wrote, make a concentrated effort to attract the "haves" to the library. I also want to mirror the overall theme I have heard throughout this Identity Crisis series. Libraries need to more flexible in meeting the needs of their communities. One of the workshops I hope that we will be able to offer in the near future is on change management. How can a library change to meet the needs of a community when it is faced with both political and procedural barriers? I do not hear much discussion on this subject among librarians and I feel it is important for libraries to begin to explore how they can change effectively.

Next month, I will look at, Where have all the newspapers gone?

Now here are some things happening around the System.

March 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.

- **Microsoft Excel - Beginner's Level - FULL, 3/5/2010, NTRLS Office**

- **Microsoft Excel: Next Steps - FULL**, 3/5/2010, NTRLS Office
- **Certified Library Computer Technologist Program - Part 4 - FULL**, 3/12/2010, NTRLS Office

Consulting

Here are some consulting activities that took place in November.

Region 2

SYNG – TWDL – Two classes in Decatur

Region 3

SYNG – TWDL – Two classes in Lewisville

Region 4

New Director Orientation – Saginaw

Region 6

SYNG – TWDL – Two classes in Mineral Wells

Consulting visit – Fort Worth Library – SW Regional

Region7

New Director Orientation – Stephenville

Other

- Services Planning Meeting
- Don't Forget to Feed Me Campaign to work with Libraries - partner
- Met with Senior Transportation Services – potential partner
- Met with Computers Made Easy – potential partner
- Attended the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education Conference.
- Concluded the Learning Express Consortium Grant.
- Continued Linux training for Adam B. and Judy.
- Continued working with Chris Jowaisas on getting Remote Learner to comply with our distance learning requirements.
- TWDL – Added presentation content from NETLS
- With a staff person and a volunteer at John Ed Keeter Public Library (Saginaw) regarding appropriate accessibility tools and services available to a literacy student who has very limited vision.
- With staff at Colleyville Public Library regarding their upcoming Low

Vision Fair.

Website and Internet Support for NTRLS Programs and Services

- Regular updates to NTRLS.org website.
- Website and other support for the four regional conferences.
- Administration for NTRLS-supported listservs.
- Continued work on revisions to CE registration process.

Plinkit

- Assistance to projects at 10 libraries.
- Assisted with creation of 3 new sites.
- Trained 3 librarians in Plinkit content management.

North Texas Library Consortium (Evergreen)

- Technical and administrative support for North Texas Library Consortium project.
- Compiled technical information for ILL Pilot Questionnaire, and assisted individual libraries with completion of questionnaire.
- Coordinated plans for group bibliographic records batchload for ILL Pilot.
- Provided coordination for software version upgrade.
- Trained 2 librarians on Evergreen Reporting.
- Handled and/or tracked 27 support issues.
- 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.
- Assisted with The Colony's transition to SIP authentication method for Overdrive.
- Assisted with technology arrangements for System Assembly Meeting.
- Attended a class on Linux.
- General technology assistance to NTRLS staff.

Libraries Served by the Technology Consultant

<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Project</i>
Alvarado	7	NTLC	Kennedale	5	NTLC, Plinkit
Aubrey	3	NTLC	Keller	4	Overdrive
Benbrook	6	Plinkit	Krum	3	NTLC
Bowie	2	Plinkit	Lake Cities	3	NTLC
Bridgeport	2	NTLC	Mineral	6	NTLC, Plinkit

Burkburnet	1	Plinkit	Wells		
†			Nocona	2	Plinkit
Burleson	7	Overdrive	Ponder	3	NTLC
Crowley	5	NTLC	Roanoke	3	NTLC
Decatur	2	NTLC	Saginaw	4	Overdrive, NTLC
Dublin	7	Plinkit	Sanger	3	NTLC
Electra	1	Plinkit	The Colony	3	Overdrive
Jacksboro	2	Plinkit	Wichita Falls	1	Overdrive
Justin	3	NTLC			
Henrietta	1	Plinkit			

Special Interest Groups & Conferences

- LibrarySupportersNetwork SIG <http://www.librarysupportersnetwork.com>
Due to the biggest North Texas snowstorm in decades, the conference and kick-off event were postponed until Friday July 23 (Kick-Off) and Saturday July 24 (conference). Due to inability to locate a complete facility available to us – at a price we can afford – before that date, the conference will be at the Decatur Civic Center.
<http://www.decaturoviccenter.com/map.htm>

Grant Applications

NTRLS submitted two grant applications to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, the Library Cooperation Grant and Special Projects Grant. With the Library Cooperation grant, NTRLS is seeking funds to establish an information literacy program in several NTRLS communities. Information Literacy is the ability for someone to research and evaluate information found online. The program outlined in the application will establish the program in several public libraries and the Fort Worth Independent School District. The classes will be taught by an academic librarian whom specializes in this type of training. For the Special Projects grant, NTRLS is seeking funds to start three pilot programs for the homebound in three communities: Alvarado, Denton and Haltom City. Each program will be administered by the local public library and focus on providing services to those individuals who cannot leave their homes to come to the library. NTRLS will act as administrative and fiscal head for the program.

TSLAC News

Last month I reported that the Texas State Library and Archives Commission has been asked to submit a revised budget with a 5 percent reduction. The System office received the email below from TSLAC outlining the proposed revisions.

As a result of the state's weakening revenue picture, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker instructed all state agencies and colleges and universities to "submit a plan to identify savings in priority increments totaling 5 percent of the general revenue and general revenue-dedicated appropriations for the 2010-2011 biennium." Plans for the 5% reduction must be submitted by February 15, 2010. For the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, this 5% reduction represents just over \$2 million. Cutting the agency's budget is particularly challenging now since almost one-quarter of the current biennium is behind us, leaving a smaller pot of funding from which to make cuts. It is even more difficult because we already operate with a very lean budget.

The agency management has worked with Chairman Pickett to develop a plan that achieves the required budget reduction while containing the most negative impacts of cuts. Most of the proposed reductions are targeted toward the areas where we received funding increases in this biennium. The greatest impact will be on grant programs that help improve the public libraries across the state. In-house, the cuts will not be painless, but, at this time, our plan does not include any reductions in staff or hiring freezes. We will monitor our agency's financial state very closely in the coming months, especially if additional reductions are required.

As outlined on the attached sheet, our budget reduction proposal consists of:

1. A total of \$100,000 will be reduced from the operating budgets of the divisions. In FY2010, we would reduce \$57,500, and in FY2011, we would reduce \$42,500. These funds would come from virtually every major program area. Each program would be reduced \$15,000 or \$20,000 over the biennium.
2. A total of \$4,432 will be reduced from the Texas Reads Grant Program. Fortunately, we have sufficient new federal funds to offset this loss of General Revenue-Dedicated funding.
3. A total of \$1.4 million will be reduced from the Loan Star Libraries Grant Program in FY2011. These funds were newly appropriated in this biennium. This will enable us to award \$6 million in direct aid grants to public libraries instead of the \$7.4 million we awarded this fiscal year. This is a very regrettable, but necessary decision. The reduction of these funds could not be spread between FY10 and FY11 because the grants were already issued for FY10 and many libraries have already spent their total award.
4. A total of \$75,000 will be reduced from the newly appropriated funding for the Talking Book Program. This is in addition to the reduction made to that operating budget in Item 1 above. Fortunately, we have sufficient new federal funds to offset most of this loss of General Revenue funding.
5. A total of \$350,750 will be reduced from the System Negotiated Grant Program (SYNG) in FY2011. These funds were newly appropriated in this biennium. Fortunately, we have \$100,000 in new federal funds to partially offset this loss of General Revenue funding. This will enable us to award \$400,000 in grants to library systems instead of the \$662,500 we awarded this fiscal year.

6. In the current Appropriations Bill, Rider 11 directed us to use funds that were newly appropriated in this biennium to track the federal ARRA Stimulus funds received by public libraries. We were given 1.0 FTE staff to do this. Rather than hire this staff to perform this function, we will use \$25,000 and \$45,000 in FY10 and FY11 respectively to contract with an outside organization to collect and report this data.