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TMLDA COMMUNIQUE

Spring 2009

Texas Municipal Library Directors Association is an Affiliate of the Texas Municipal League

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Mary Alford

“It is what it is”

This phrase has been used quite a bit lately by my city manager and it came up again this weekend as I thought about this column after TLA’s Legislative Day and the never-ending Stimulus talks.

Many definitions can be applied to this phrase. Some positive, some negative. According to the Urban Dictionary (www.urbandictionary.com) it could mean:

1. A phrase that seems to simply state the obvious but actually means “it will be what it is,” as in “it ain’t gonna change, so deal with it or don’t.”
2. A cliché, popular within the circles of coaches, business execs, and those of us who just want to say “It’s happened. I’m going to forget about it. I’m going to move on. There is nothing that can be done about it.” (Voted by USA Today as the #1 cliché of 2004.)
3. In a nutshell, it means “this is the way it’s going right now, and that’s how it is.” Kind of a way to say: don’t over think the situation. A reminder to keep things simple, don’t overanalyze things, or a way to put a definition on something that’s hard to explain.

So why does this phrase keep popping in my head? Headlines bombard us like “The Public Library Renaissance” from Freakonomics Blog of the NY Times, “Libraries Stand Ready to Help in Tough

Economic Times” from Jim Rettig and the Huffington Post, “In Recession, Libraries Are Booming” from CBS news, “The Library – A Recession Sanctuary” from Derrick Z. Jackson with the Boston Globe, and more.

We know we are busy and worked to communicate this to the Texas Legislature on February 25 at TLA’s Legislative Day. Most of the offices I visited would not commit to our request for support of the initiatives and one Senator offered the “may be something for libraries in the Stimulus” phrase. We are on the front line of dealing with the recession fallout and will continue to serve our patrons to the best of our ability because we are librarians, even though we have difficulty getting anyone’s attention to the funding needs of libraries.

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**TMLDA Business Meeting
at the
Texas Library Association
Annual Conference
Houston
Thursday, April 2, 2009
3:00 – 3:50 p.m.
This meeting is not
listed in the
Conference Preliminary
Program**

*From the President:
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Stimulus Funding? Or as I learned, the correct name is American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). ALA offers a site for ARRA 101 that was very helpful and directed me to the site that is the centerpiece of the effort to carry out the ARRA with transparency and a means to track the progress (their words). As I begin educating myself on how the ARRA can help libraries, I did a keyword search at the Recovery.gov site on “library” and “public libraries”. My searches yielded no results. Uh-oh.

But I will not let negative thought win out. Funding may be tight and may get tighter, but we are developing a very strong following with the people that count – the voters. You also have a wealth of knowledge among your colleagues to help with ideas or problem solving. Let’s help each other out by talking and sharing at TLA, throughout the Recovery and beyond.



TMLDA Newsletter Editor

Sue Compton
Flower Mound Public Library
3030 Broadmoor Ln
Flower Mound, TX 75022
972-874-6151
sue.compton@flower-mound.com

TML Director’s Report

Steve Brown

TMLDA Representative on the TML Board

The TML Board met in December to finalize the League’s legislative program. You can watch the results of that agenda being played out daily in Austin, as the Legislature works slowly toward a new state biennial budget in a period of economic contraction.

One of TML’s major concerns again this session is a number of bills which, if passed, would place unacceptable limits on the ability of local governments to pay for the infrastructure and services their residents want. This is particularly evident in bills that would place caps on property tax evaluations. Over time, such measures have the potential to cripple the ability of local governments to raise revenue.

You can follow along with the legislative circus at several web sites. TML Legislative updates are posted frequently at:
http://www.tml.org/legis_update_current.htm,
where you can also sign up to receive email notifications when legislative updates are posted. If you want to keep closer tabs on the legislative process, a good starting point is www.capitol.state.tx.us.

For those of you who took part in Library Legislative Day on February 25 (sponsored by that other organization) – thank you! You helped make a real contribution to legislative understanding of library concerns.

Participants probably left Austin with as many different impressions as there were legislative office visits, but overall it was a positive experience. In public library terms, the focus was on the Texas State Library and Archives Commissions budget request.

The Legislative Budget Board has recommended that the legislature fund the agency’s base request, and the lobbying emphasis has been on asking for support of several “exceptional item” requests that would supplement funding for TexShare, regional library systems, and the Loan Star Libraries program. The basic message in each case is that these are programs that have been proven to work, and that we are asking for reasonable amounts of funding to make the programs more effective.

The next TML Board meeting is scheduled for March 27 in Austin. If you have suggestions or concerns, please let me know so that I can convey the message to the rest of the TML Board.

**TMLDA OFFICERS
2008-2009**

President

Mary Alford
Bellaire Public Library
5111 Jessamine St
Bellaire, TX 77401
(713) 662-8160
malford@ci.bellaire.tx.us

Vice-President/President Elect

Dolores Greenwald
Sachse Public Library
3815 Sachse Road
Sachse, TX 75048
972-877-4081
dgreenwald@cityofsachse.com

Secretary

Vicki McCallister
Dickinson Public Library
1837 FM 517 East
Dickinson, TX 77539
281-534-3812
vmmares@comcast.net

Treasurer

Jana Prock
Keller Public Library
640 Johnson Road
Keller, TX 76248
(817) 743-4822
jprock@kellerlibrary.org

TML Board Representative

Steve Brown
North Richland Hills Public Library
9015 Grand Avenue
North Richland Hills, TX 76180
817-427-6813
sbrown@nrhtx.com

Immediate Past President

Kerry McGeath
Southlake Public Library
1400 Main St.
Southlake, Texas 76092
817-748-8384
kmcgeath@ci.southlake.tx.us

Web Content Advisor

Lucile Dade
DeSoto Public Library
211 E. Pleasant Run Road
DeSoto, Texas 75115-3939
972-230-9658
ldade@ci.desoto.tx.us

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