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TMLDA COMMUNIQUE

Summer 2009

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Mary Alford

With the rise of the Internet and the success of Google, Yahoo and Amazon, libraries were expected to make a quiet exit. Reports of the library's demise have been greatly exaggerated as seen with increased use of libraries continuing this summer. Libraries have become a refuge for information and connection, job hunting and reducing personal expenses. The Internet has made a profound contribution to the modern world and to meet the expectations of people, libraries have had to change as well and we are doing so.

With 24/7 access, the Internet has exposed the limitations of a physical building with limited operating hours. Internet users expect to be able to access any information they want, from anywhere in the world at any time. Importantly, they feel the Internet is free. Operating a library is not. While a library offers a community an enhanced quality of life and provides services that charge nominal fees, today's reality is that funds are limited and changes may need to be made.

It is going to be rare if a Texas library does not have its budget threaten this year or next year. Our usage is up and we could use more funding, but we will learn to be creative in seeking funding sources and continue earning community support.

TLA Annual Assembly is July 28-30 and while many travel budgets have been affected (decimated sounds so harsh), I hope that you can find some time and funds to get to Austin at least for the TMLDA meeting. We have been scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28 and even though the agenda is still being finalized you will have a chance to connect with your colleagues and talk about the challenges ahead. A nominating committee will be selected and discussion on the TML conference will be among the agenda items. And yes, I promise an honest-to-goodness printed agenda.

Why do I do what I do? Why be a librarian that can be the brunt of endless jokes about shushing and dirty books? There are plenty of other businesses out there such as Google, Yahoo, and the social sites that can design databases and create accessibility a little better, but machines themselves cannot teach us or provide human touch or emotional support – people do.

Recently a Bellaire resident had been told about an article that mentioned her grandson in *USA Today* and came to the library to find a copy of the article. He had been wounded in Iraq, paralyzed from the waist down and receiving treatment on the East coast. We found her the article, printed it off the web as well as made a photocopy of the article from the actual newspaper. It was when she saw the never-before seen photo of her grandson in a wheelchair that emotions took over and she received a big hug from staff. That's why I do what I do.

TML Director's Report

Steve Brown

TMLDA Representative to the TML Board

The TML Board of Directors met on June 18 and 19 in El Paso to review the League's annual budget and discuss the recently ended (I won't say completed) legislative session.

On the budget front, the board approved a balanced proposal that reflects a strong organization with healthy fund balances. TML represents 1,104 member cities, from the largest to some of the smallest in Texas.

The responsibility of representing the interests of such diverse membership when the Texas Legislature comes to town has become a herculean task. This session, there were a total of 7,609 bills introduced, over 1,500 of which would have impacted Texas cities. Of the 1,500, only a few more than 120 city-related bills finally passed. As always, TML's legislative efforts focused first on preventing the passage of harmful bills, and the staff apparently prevented any real damage from being done to Texas cities, and made small gains in some areas. Call it a draw.

For employees of Texas cities who are enrolled in TMRS, H.B. 360 makes some useful and needed changes to stabilize and strengthen the retirement fund and guarantees that member accounts will be credited with at least 5% interest each year - good news for those who may someday want to retire.

Also of interest is H.B. 1720. It provides a way to remove some of the uncertainty in the rules regarding what kinds of statements might constitute impermissible political advertising by a city or city official. When a city wishes to provide information to voters regarding a ballot measure such as a bond issue, it will now be able to seek an advance ruling from the Texas Ethics Commission as to the legality of the proposed statement. In the past city officials had to make the statement first before finding out whether they had just broken the law. A small blow for common sense.

S.B. 1182 helps clarify the rules for posting of agendas for public meetings, by specifically allowing public officials to make purely informational reports on items of "community interest" without having included the subject of the report in the agenda for the meeting. "Item of community interest" is still narrowly defined, but at least city officials will not have to wait until the next meeting date to include congratulations to the local library for winning, for example, an Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award.

That's all from El Paso. The TML Board will next meet during annual conference in Fort Worth, October 21-23, 2009.

**TMLDA Business Meeting
at the
Texas Library Association
Annual Assembly
Austin Hyatt
Tuesday, July 28, 2009
4:00 p.m.**

**Join us in a discussion of
TMLDA's presence at the
TML Annual Conference**

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TMLDA Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award

This is a great way to show your elected officials the best your library has to offer. In 2008 thirty-four libraries received this award, many of them receiving recognition at council meetings or with articles and photos in newspapers. To receive the award a library must demonstrate achievement in ten categories of library service:

1. Providing a Summer Reading Club
2. Providing Services to the Underserved
3. Enhancing Services – increase in service or change in type of service
4. Providing Marketing Materials – brochures, flyers, press releases, newspaper articles, bookmarks
5. Maintaining Updated Policies and Procedures
6. Providing Programming for Adults and Families
7. Providing Literacy Support – family storytimes, bilingual materials or programming, other materials or activities
8. Participating in Collaborative Efforts – programs with other entities or departments, volunteers, practicum students, etc.
9. Providing an Opportunity for Staff Training
10. Maintaining a Library Web Presence

The deadline for applying for the award is December 31, 2009 so there is plenty of time to collect the information needed. For more information on the award please visit the TMLDA website at www.tmlda.org, or call Sue Compton at 972-874-6151.