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Oklahoma Goes South

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The budget situation in Oklahoma began to go south after January 1, 2002. The state began to experience revenue failures from then until the end of the fiscal year in June. During the legislative session which began in February, it became clear that not only would there be no new money for the coming fiscal year, but indeed the Department of Libraries would have a budget reduction. At the same time, because of the revenue failures, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries along with all other state agencies began giving back funds from the current fiscal year. In all, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries gave back approximately \$280,000 from the original budget allocation.

The legislative session ended in May with all state agencies taking a budget reduction for the coming year. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries took a five percent budget reduction over the original budget allocation for the previous year. The budget reductions at the state library will be in the area of unfilled staff positions, reductions in out-of-state travel, supplies, equipment, and printing. The legislature requested that budget reductions not be made to services and we were able to mostly observe that request.

As an important member of the Oklahoma legislature observed, "there is nothing magic about July 1st," so we are all holding our breath to see if the revenue situation stabilizes. The hope is that the revenue forecasts will more nearly match receipts and that the five percent reductions will be all that is necessary for the current fiscal year. Some state agencies have furloughed staff, but the state library does not anticipate that as being necessary, if there are no further reductions. The situation is fluid and volatile. Keep your fingers crossed!

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