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Office of Commonwealth Libraries

If you have been reading this series since its beginning last August, then you have been reading about these three top-layer management themes woven within the various topics: (1) how public libraries are formally and cost-effectively connected to each other to share resources in a very large way across the county (WLN™) and the state of Pennsylvania; (2) while also being managed and functioning at generally high levels each in its own community, as non-profit corporations; (3) while at all times striving to be responsible, needs-based community providers of highly valued services for all age groups.

It is my purpose that this series at least conveys this three-part message, and that for those of you who work in a corporate environment, you will easily recognize the “corporate” nature of public libraries.

That said, today I am going to say more about the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. This is what it says of itself at <https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov>: “The Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) operates a major research library and collects, preserves, and connects state government, libraries, and all residents with the information and resources needed for education, enrichment, and advancement.” Its Mission statement is: “The Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) supports, develops, and provides library services for learning and advancement.”

More specifically, OCL describes itself as : “(1) providing advisory services and continuing education for library staff and volunteer leadership at public, school, academic, and special libraries; (2) coordinating and funding library services and programs such as POWER Library and Library Services for the Visually Impaired and Disabled; (3) awarding state Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Act grants to public libraries for construction and renovation projects; and (4) collecting [annually] financial and statistical data (primarily from public libraries).” Publishing data from this last activity, and drawing implications from the data, is a really vital function for charting a relevant future for libraries.

Pennsylvania’s Deputy Secretary & Commissioner for Libraries, and State Librarian, who is appointed by the Governor and the Secretary of Education, currently Pedro Rivera, is the head administrator for the OCL. Since 2015, the position has been held by Glenn Miller, who prior to that served as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Library Association for 20 years. He came very well prepared indeed to his appointment to the OCL leadership position, and has always been held in high regard. I have interacted with him a bit in both positions and can attest to that.

Mr. Miller retired just this April, and so we now wish him well in retirement. I am very sure that, under a new Deputy Secretary, the OCL will continue to be a very important and unifying office for all libraries in Pennsylvania, though perhaps still largely out of sight to most patrons. Because OCL is mostly out of sight to patrons, I wanted, with this

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article, to tell you about it, to raise your awareness about its very important role for public libraries and you.

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