

# *Message from the President*



I was honored when I was elected president of the Birmingham Public Library Board of Trustees in November 2008. I want to thank the Board for entrusting me with this responsibility. I know it takes more than one person to make a great library like ours shine. With the help of the trustees, city leaders, library employees, and citizens, I know there is no stopping us in what we can achieve for our library system's future.

The Birmingham Public Library Board of Trustees has had a busy and productive 2009. We hired a library director and associate director, saw major improvements to our system's Web site, and more. We have continued to resolve outstanding issues, brought in new initiatives and made significant strides. We are always looking for new ways to make the city's library system better for its citizens. We look forward to seeing bigger things happen for us in 2010.

As I reflect on the accomplishments that were made in 2009, I can't help but be saddened by the loss of several committed individuals who served us well. Mr. Jimmie Williams left the board for family reasons this year. We experienced the untimely passing of Ms. Lillie Mae Harris Fincher, the Board's immediate past president. We were also pained by the passing of retired employees: Mrs. Norma Blount, Mrs. Miriam Woods, Mr. Leon Harrington, Mrs. Patricia Watson and Mrs. Ada Blount. They were all true gems in our system.

I want to express sincere thanks for the advice and assistance of trustees E. Bryding Adams, Thomas Adams, Nell Allen, Gwendolyn Amamoo, Georgia Blair, Anthony Johnson, Shanta' Owens, Samuel Rumore, Jr. and Dora Sims. I'd also like to thank library associate director, Pamela O. Lyons; library director, Irene S. Blalock and our recording secretary, Jennifer Neely. Together, this team has been responsible for facilitating communication among trustees, staff, and the general public. Finally, I can't forget to thank the library employees for their assistance in working on agendas, presentations, and reports that they submitted to the board for consideration.

It would be impossible for me to cite every achievement made in 2009 in my yearly report. However, I want to highlight several projects the Board's seven committees addressed this year. The committees are listed in alphabetical order.

## **Finance Committee**

This past year, Thomas Adams was the committee chair. Committee members were Nell Allen, Shanta Craig Owens, Samuel Rumore, Jr. and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch. In 2009, the board approved the Birmingham Public Library Purchasing and Procedures Manual.

Other petitions included:

- Scheduled a meeting with auditors and the Board
- Established a Conflict of Interest Policy for the position of coordinator and all other positions above the coordinator level. For those who hold positions below the coordinator level, it was recommended that they receive training
- Approved the Birmingham Library Fund budget with the Director making regular reports to the Board for grants and programs
- Implemented cost-saving measures for potential budget savings
- Developed an Internal Controls Policy
- Developed a Fiscal Management Policy
- Reduced the number of credit cards in the Business office
- Consolidated the checking account
- Had library business manager attend board meetings to answer any financial questions

### **Friends/Advocacy Committee**

This past year, Dora Sims was the committee chair. Committee members were Anthony Johnson, Gwendolyn Amamoo, and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch. In 2009, the committee launched a major community awareness campaign.

Some projects were:

- Developed a “sinking fund” for Board projects where trustees made a voluntary contribution
- Held Patron Appreciation Day in all libraries
- Hosted a membership drive during National Friends of Library Week
- Maintained communication with elected officials as it relates to BPL’s programs
- Actively participated with the Birmingham Public Library Foundation
- Held system-wide membership drives for Branch Friends
- Developed a Swine Flu action plan
- Received National Friends of Library Week Proclamation from mayor
- Solicited 100% membership of all trustees for the Freedom to Read Foundation
- Printed article in “The Voice,” which is part of the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations
- Received a letter of support from Representative Spencer Bachus for LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act)
- Participated in the 2009 Birmingham Christmas Parade
- Selected as the State of Alabama Representative for ALTAFF
- Expanded membership to BCALA

### **Long-Range Planning Committee**

This past year, Georgia Blair was the committee chair. Committee members were E. Bryding Adams, Thomas Adams and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch. In 2009, the committee recommended the furnishings for East Lake and Powderly libraries.

Other projects were:

- Named meeting room at the Powderly Library in honor of Ms. Miriam D. Witherspoon
- Reviewed the archives facilities area

### **Nominating Committee**

This past year, Gwendolyn Amamoo was the committee chair. Committee members were Samuel Rumore, Jr. and Georgia Blair. I did not serve as an ex-officio member on this committee. In November 2009, the committee unanimously presented the 2010 slate for the president and vice-president to the Board. Both nominees on the slate were elected.

Other item to be recommended:

- Asked the Policy Committee to establish a policy on term limits for officers

### **Personnel Committee**

This past year, Nell Allen was the committee chair. Committee members were Bryding Adams, Dora Sims, Georgia Blair, and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch. In 2009, the committee coordinated a national search for a library director and associate director for Birmingham Public Library. Renee S. Blalock was hired as director in June 2009. Angela Fisher Hall was hired as associate director and began work in December 2009.

Other items were:

- Developed a library director performance evaluation document and process
- Held an employee appeal procedure
- Developed advertising standards for posting library positions

### **Policies, Procedures and By-Laws Committee**

This past year, Samuel Rumore Jr. was committee chair. Committee members were Shanta' Owens, Dora Sims, and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch. In 2009, the committee worked with administration to schedule a swearing-in ceremony for Board members and the director. Also, several committee policies were developed, reviewed and/or amended.

Policies recommended and approved were:

- By-Laws of the Board
- Outside Employment Policy
- Line and Staff Relations Policy
- Collection Management Policy

### **Public Relations Committee**

This past year, Shanta' Owens was committee chair. Committee members were Anthony Johnson, Gwendolyn Amamoo, and ex-officio member Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch.

Other projects were:

- Increased the presence of programs targeting teens and senior citizens for Birmingham Public Library Presents on Bright House Networks
- Recruited City Council and Chamber of Commerce members to become involved in library programs like Adult Summer Reading and other services
- Updated library Web site to include a trustee page with a trustee directory, additional pictures, biographies, contact information and minutes from Board meetings
- Displayed pictures of trustees in all libraries and boardrooms
- Developed a hosting plan for out of town visiting library guests

**Past President's Initiative:**

Former Board President Lillie Mae Harris Fincher motioned in May 2009 that a plaque should be mounted on the wall in the Linn Henley building with other library director plaques, showing that Pamela O. Lyons had served as interim director for the library. The Board approved the motion, which specified that the plaque be mounted upon Lyons' retirement.

**President's Initiatives:**

- Requested that a staff volunteer to give the invocation at each board meeting (Submitted by administration)
- Asked staff members to make presentations at each Board meeting (Submitted by administration)
- Submitted articles on Board meetings to The Birmingham Times Newspaper
- Gave certificates of recognition to employees and volunteers
- Held Board meeting at Glen Iris Elementary School
- Expanded partnership between BPL and Birmingham City Schools
- Promoted all "Library Events" via Birmingham City Schools email system
- Submitted two articles printed in "The Voice," ALTAFF
- Participated on BPL's Facebook page
- Attended City of Birmingham Education Committee meetings
- Planned reception for library's interim director and director
- Sent correspondence on behalf of Board, i.e., resolutions, greetings, letters of thanks and sympathy
- Held appointment with administration and newly-elected council member
- Requested that Board packets be sent via email
- Participated in Season's Reading and BPL Annual Report video
- Maintained accessibility with administration
- Visited every library in 2009
- Coordinated library Thanksgiving holiday schedule with the Office of the Mayor
- Lobbied Councilor Roderick Royal, committee chairman for the City Council, for funding for the Archives
- Sent holiday greetings to all libraries, city councilors, mayor and school board members

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- Solicited 15 memberships for Friends of Birmingham Public Library
- Invited Board and administration to Ethics seminar at Birmingham Board of Education

As we move toward 2010, I thank the Board for the unanimous vote of confidence that you gave me with the reappointment as your president. We have made great strides in making the Board more visible, open and effective.

Our attention must always be the citizens of Birmingham. We are committed to providing stellar services with less financial resources. We must continue to ensure that BPL remains relevant to the community. This year was a major election time for Birmingham, and the Board looks forward to sharing its vision with the city's new leadership in 2010.

Birmingham Public Library's employees are the cores of continuity for our system. Their job performance was outstanding despite various distractions this year: the recession, the swine flu and the uncertainty of the future of public libraries at the national level. In light of it all, staff members never took their eyes off the mission: providing the highest quality library service to citizens for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment and enjoyment. We must continue to highlight the outstanding contributions that staff members bring to our system. Sometimes we honor them when they retire, but that does not capture the outstanding contribution that they make every day. So our challenge is to work in partnership with administration to establish a process and criteria for expressing the Board's appreciation to the employees. I invite your suggestions on how best to proceed. Again, thank you for your assistance as we continue to move our system forward.

In solidarity,

Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch  
President