

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Kentucky's state librarian receives lifetime achievement award

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 8, 2012) - State Librarian and Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives Commissioner Wayne Onkst has been recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Kentucky Library Association (KLA). The award is given to an individual who has shown continuous, sustained support of the library profession through his or her life.

“Wayne Onkst could have earned this Lifetime Achievement Award solely on his nationally-recognized work as the director of the Kenton County Public Library, but we are fortunate that he chose to share his knowledge, passion and compassion with libraries across the state as our state librarian,” said Lisa Rice, Kentucky Library Association President and director of the Warren County Public Library. “Wayne's leadership has allowed libraries to continue open new buildings, increase services and set records in usage during one of the most challenging periods in our memory.”

During his tenure as state librarian, public library use across the Commonwealth has increased, with a record 20 million visits recorded last year. In addition, for the first time in the state's history, every county in Kentucky has public library service.

“Kentucky's libraries provide outstanding service every day for the Commonwealth,” said Onkst. “Being involved in their work and growth over the years has been a wonderful experience.”

Onkst, a London, Ky. native, began his 40-year library career as a shelver at the Laurel County Public Library in 1972. After completing a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Kentucky (UK) and a master's degree in library science from the UK School of Library and Information Science, he became adult reference librarian at Kenton County Public Library in 1979. Onkst worked his way up at Kenton County Public Library and eventually became director of the library in 1999. Onkst was appointed to the position of state librarian by Governor Ernie Fletcher in 2006.

Onkst has long been recognized as a leader in the library profession. In 2010, he was awarded the UK Library School Outstanding Alumnus Award. He has also received the Mary Ann Mongan Literacy Award, the KLA Outstanding Public Library Service Award, the American Library Association Sullivan Award for Director's Support of Children's Service and the Children Inc. Award for Innovative Services to Children.

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