

## Thoughts from the State Librarian

by Christie Brandau, State Librarian

Are you prepared for **Y2K-1.5mbps**?

Remember the hype about **Y2K** in the late 1990s? In addition to legitimate concerns about the capability of computers to recognize the year 2000, there sprang up a number of wild theories that sent some stockpiling supplies and fleeing to the woods! Thankfully, 2000 came and went with few, if any, technical catastrophes.

And this year there is the **Y2K7** problem caused when computers do not recognize the extended four weeks of Daylight Savings Time now mandated by the U.S. government. Millions of computers, PDA's and other devices must be changed in order to display the correct time change on the second Sunday in March and the first Sunday in November. Again, I believe that this problem will be solved without much fanfare.

But I'm not as confident that the **Y2K-1.5mbps** problem will be resolved easily. **Y2K-1.5mbps** is the label I've given to describe the dilemma facing many of our libraries: the lack of connectivity to broadband Internet during a time of tremendous information and connectivity growth.

Last month, the State Library, with the sponsorship of the American Library Association, convened a summit on this topic. You can find the website at:

[http://skyways.lib.ks.us/KSL/ce/broadband\\_summit/#agenda](http://skyways.lib.ks.us/KSL/ce/broadband_summit/#agenda)

The focus of the event was on Kansas public libraries that have connection speeds of less than 1.5 megabits per second. Over two-thirds of our libraries are in that category. Libraries rely on the Internet for a number of operating functions and many of our patrons depend on the library for their connection to the world via the Internet. Without broadband Internet access, we will not have the bandwidth to provide more and more applications. Why don't libraries have broadband? The reasons are varied, but they boil down to three:



- lack of availability
- cost (including completing the complicated E-rate form and finding the match)
- and lack of awareness of the need for a high speed connection

These are problems which have been overcome in other states, including our neighbor, Missouri, where every public library in the state has a T-1 or better Internet connection.

I have great hope that the outcome of the broadband summit will be solutions and actions that help us avoid the looming **Y2K-1.5mbps** dilemma. Libraries must have affordable high-speed Internet to serve

Kansans now and in the future.

*Christi Brandon*