Children are the most “at risk” group in Oklahoma. “At risk” children are those that are in violent or drug infested homes, underfed, ill, or illiterate. The library is one institution which can make a difference in these children’s lives, the future of these children and, inevitably, our own future.

This year, the American Library Association President, Mary Somerville, chose for her platform, “Kids Can’t Wait...Library Advocacy Now.” In a report published by ALA she states, “Every library’s customer base begins with the child. What we do for children today has ripple effects far beyond tomorrow. How well we prepare our children to live, learn and work in an information society will shape the future of our libraries and our nation for generations to come.”

Many Oklahoma libraries are already doing wonderful things with children. On January 16th at the Enid Cherokee Strip Conference Center, librarians from across Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas and Missouri attended a workshop entitled, “Kids Can’t Wait—Children at Risk and the Library.” At this Public Libraries Division sponsored workshop, participants learned the status of Oklahoma’s children and discovered programs which have successfully addressed the needs of these children at risk. This was a wonderful experience, both for the librarians and the non-librarian presenters who attended. The non-librarian children’s advocates were very impressed with Oklahoma librarians’ efforts on behalf of children.

Thomas Kemper and Patrice Dunkelgod of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, along with Fran Morris (who most of us fondly remember as “Miss Fran”) who works as a children’s mental health consultant and writer for the Oklahoma Gazette, spoke about the status of Oklahoma’s children. They presented startling facts and talked about various programs involved with improving these children’s futures.

A panel of librarians and people with successful programs shared a number of useful ideas for the participants to take back to their own libraries. Donna Norvell, ODL youth consultant, along with Basha Hartley, Pioneer Library System, shared a state-wide view. Dana Morrow, Metropolitan Library System, spoke of the successful outreach program to Head Starts, park sites, and juvenile centers. Anita Ross from McAlester Public Library shared how a simple summer lunch program has developed into a very successful outreach program to children in her area and Desiree Webber, Moore Public Library, presented ideas from a

(cont. on page 9)
OLA President's Message

The joint meeting between the Oklahoma Library Association and the Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA) is in the last stages of development; programs are set, the keynote speaker, Pat Schuman, and banquet speaker Bob Edwards are confirmed. The Program Committee has done an excellent job this year under the careful supervision of Kathleen Todd and Peggy Cook. I hope each of you will take a moment to thank each of the individuals and the members of the Program Committee, who have worked diligently to make this meeting a memorable event. I would encourage you to read the preview carefully and plan ahead to attend this meeting—it is a true reflection of this fine group.

This meeting offers each of us in Oklahoma an opportunity to not only see statewide friends, but to establish new relationships with colleagues from eleven other states. The opportunity to be involved in a regional meeting is not always readily available to everyone, so I encourage you to take this opportunity and make the most of it.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee, chaired by Gerald Hickman, is doing a review of OLA’s Constitution and Bylaws, as well as the Handbook. This Committee has done a tremendous amount of work and their endeavors should be recognized. As part of this work, the Association reviewed the dues structure for the next four-year period. The Executive Committee approved the Finance Committee’s recommendation to the Bylaws Committee to increase dues to keep the Association abreast of cost of living expenses. Please review the suggested Bylaws changes, which will be provided prior to the Annual meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Robert M. Bird Health Sciences (BHS) Library for their collective support during this year and over the years. Each of the staff have had to assume additional duties in order for me to do the things that I need to do this year. I have always believed that a Library is as good as the entire staff. The BHS Library staff is an exceptional group and in my humble opinion provides the Health Sciences Center and myself with outstanding work.

—Marty Thompson
Just Desserts: Political awareness & "decadence"

... a half-day preconference to the OLA/MPLA Annual Conference on grassroots lobbying and influencing people.

Join your OLA/MPLA colleagues for "decadent desserts" from the kitchens of Shangri-La! Ann Symons, school librarian from Juneau (Alaska) High School, will keynote the Legislative Preconference. Tabletalk discussions will center around the importance of librarians from school, public, academic, and special libraries being involved in the political process. Influencing legislation and regulatory bodies at the state and local level is every librarian's job.

After enjoying Ann's stimulating presentation and decadent desserts (lots of chocolate with no calories) with your fellow librarians, join tabletalk discussions on topics such as "How to Become Political at the Local Level," "Thinking Politically: Everyone's Job," "Success Stories: Local Efforts That Worked in Connecting Legislators and Librarians." After the conference, all participants will receive "tip sheets" from each tabletalk.

This is a preconference you won't want to miss; mark your conference schedule NOW!

—Debra Engel

How to Have Great Library Boards, or Merging Divisions for Strength

Strong and active library trustees play an important part in the success of a library. Their understanding of library policies and trends is enhanced by participation in organizations such as OLA.

For several years, OLA’s Trustees Division has struggled with obtaining a consistent leadership strong enough to carry its membership into the future. Due to constant turnover on library boards, the OLA Leadership has found it difficult to locate a willing participant for the Trustees Division Chair. Last year's chair, Annette Brown, should be commended for her energy, excitement and desire to resurrect the Division. Unfortunately she had to give up her position as chair when her term as a trustee expired.

Because of the lack of continuity in leadership, many goals and plans for the Trustees Division have not had time to formulate or be completed. During the 1995-96 year, the Public Libraries Division began working closely with the Trustees Division and ODL in planning workshops that would benefit both Divisions. At last year’s annual OLA conference, Public Libraries Division presented a humorous look at library boards and how to work with them. During the spring, PLD attended regional Trustee Orientation workshops sponsored by ODL to encourage membership in OLA.

The Public Libraries Division can offer leadership continuity for Trustees, allowing many of the efforts and ideas to be carried on from term to term. The PLD has an added bonus of working directly with Public Library Directors who can encourage their Trustees to join and take advantage of OLA’s benefits.

With these points in mind, the Public Libraries Division proposed to the OLA Executive Board of OLA that the Trustees Division be dissolved and that the Public Libraries Division assume responsibility of planning for and encouraging membership of the Trustees. A Trustees Planning Committee will be formed to assist in identifying the needs of Trustees and help in meeting those needs. The planning committee will consist of at least 2 public library trustees, 1 ODL consultant and the leadership of the Public Library Division. The Executive Board accepted the proposal and the PLD leadership is beginning to identify members to work on this committee.

PLD is continuing to include Trustees by offering programs at the upcoming annual conference, covering the topics of planning for automation and planning retirement/benefits plans for the public library.

The leadership of PLD invites Trustees and library directors who are interested in serving on the planning committee to contact Janet Brooks, Chair of PLD or Linda Levy, Vice-Chair/Chair Elect.

—Janet Brooks

Universal Service and YOU!

Every librarian in every type of library is concerned about how to access the Internet and the cost of telecommunications lines. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission is taking an important leadership role in developing rules for the universal service fund in Oklahoma.

The preliminary recommendations by the Federal-State Joint Board of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) endorses a wide range of telecommunications services for the nation's schools and libraries.

The Oklahoma Library Association has taken a strong stand to support the Oklahoma Corporation Commission in providing the most favorable telecommunications environment possible for Oklahoma's libraries. The discussion needs your support.

To find out how to get involved and for further information, please call the OLA Legislative co-chairs, Debra Engel (405) 321-1481 X143 or Donna Morris (405) 231-8654.
The Internet: Are we putting all our eggs in one basket too soon?
by Robert A. Seal

In my last column, I sang the praises of FirstSearch and its Web interface and the increasing number of full-text sources it offers. It is a great resource and getting better all the time. Unfortunately, something is getting in the way of using FirstSearch (and other electronic resources) effectively or at all. That something is the increasingly unreliable Internet.

Like many libraries, we switched from tapeloading our primary periodical databases to Internet access about a year ago. The advantages touted by the vendors were numerous and engaging: more up-to-date information, full-text of several hundred journals, no local file maintenance or disk space, easy access to dozens of files using one interface, and recently, the WWW graphical interface. We also access FirstSearch via the Web for journals, no local file maintenance or disk space, easy access to dozens of databases to Internet access about a year ago. The advantages touted by the vendors were numerous and engaging: more up-to-date information, full-text of several hundred journals, no local file maintenance or disk space, easy access to dozens of files using one interface, and recently, the WWW graphical interface. We also access FirstSearch via the Web for similar reasons and one other—lower telecomm costs.

All these reasons for utilizing the Internet made a lot of sense and still do—in theory. Unfortunately, because the local, regional, and national telecommunications infrastructures have been unable to keep up with the astronomical demand for and use of the Internet, we are regularly experiencing gridlock in our library whenever we try to use the Net for database access. Response time is sluggish, sometimes infinite, as more and more data fly down the information highway. Rush hour on the Net some days lasts for hours. Patrons and librarians are frustrated to say the least. We spend thousands of dollars for database access we can’t use. We can’t give good service and it seems to be getting worse.

The cover of the October 1996 issue of Internet World asks the question that has crossed our collective minds more than once: “The Big Crash: Is It Coming?” referring to the possibility of a total collapse of the Net due to over-load. As more and more users vie for a lane on the highway and as more and more multimedia eat up bandwidth, one wonders how long before “The Big Crash” happens.

So many libraries have expressed their concern about FirstSearch response time and availability that OCLC has produced a new publication which describes the Internet infrastruc-ture and some ways in which OCLC can help libraries identify and alleviate problems. Libraries, the Internet and OCLC, available from AMIGOS, notes that the telecommunications link between your library and OCLC consists of many pieces, any one of which could be the cause of your response time problems. It is a complex grid of local area networks, regional service providers, telecommunica­tion backbones, modems, routers, adapters, and a zillion other pieces, all of which are subject to bottlenecks, slowdowns, and equipment failures. Not very reassuring, is it?

What does the future hold? Increased demand and usage to be sure, especially when cable TV and phone companies break into the Internet service provider market, adding millions more users to the Net. In the meantime, we ponder dedicated lines, more networked CD-ROMs, a return to tapeloading, and (gasp!) using printed indexes.

—Bob Seal is AMIGOS Board of Trustees Chair and University Librarian, Texas Christian University. This article first appeared in the Fall 1996 Que Pasa? and is reprinted by permission of AMIGOS.

Communicating better at work

Experience shows there are many ways managers can improve internal com­munication. Here are some things they should do:

° Understand that communication is a two-way street. It involves giving information and getting feedback from employees.

° Put more emphasis on face-to-face communication with employees.

° Ask themselves, each time they give an instruction, if the message is clear.

° View information as “service to” employees and not “power over” them.

° Listen to employees; show respect for them when they speak. They’ll feel part of the team and will tend to be more dedicated and pro­ductive.

° Don’t just talk open-door policy. Practice it by walking around and talking to employees. Allow people to disagree and to come up with new ideas.

° Conduct one-on-one meetings. Ask each employee to tell the manager how the manager can help the employee to do a better job. Then share those things employees can do to help the manager do a better job.

° Concentrate on building credibility with employees. Managers who lack credibility and fail to create a climate of trust and openness aren’t believed—no matter how hard they try to communicate.

from Communication Briefings
Pushing toward virtual libraries, taking advantage of e-resources

On Friday, November 1, I joined about 60 people for the Fall ACRL Oklahoma conference, "Realizing the Virtual Library," at Rose State College. Outside it was cold and windy, but inside, I met new faces and stimulating ideas and issues. Three speakers told their stories, then led afternoon breakout sessions.

Electronic journals need attention and control

Eric Lease Morgan of North Carolina State University Libraries talked about issues of online periodical access. The same broad issues apply to all serials: questions of selection, acquisition, storage, organization, and access. If faculty publish electronically, who’s collecting, archiving, and indexing the material? Later checking the Internet (gopher://arl.cni.org) I found the Association of Research Libraries reporting that there were about 2500 scholarly Internet listservs and 675 electronic journals and newsletters being published in May 1995, numbers which had increased 40% since the previous May, and which ARL was still compiling for 1996!

Morgan created "Mr. Serials," an automatic electronic serials acquisitions system, which collects and provides access to library e-serials. The Mr. Serials process works as along as the electronic journal is delivered by e-mail and is consistently formatted! Needless to say, the automated process takes human intervention and cleanup. Searching is free text—there’s no controlled vocabulary. For more information, his address is eric_morgan@ncsu.edu or http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/staff/morgan/

A catalog of Internet databases

"We’re not just cataloging the Internet, he said, "instead, we’re selecting materials that happen to be on the Internet—things that if they were in print and fit your collection development policy, you’d have in your library." Erik Jul described OCLC’s U.S. Department of Education-funded project to look at problems and opportunities in building a catalog of Internet databases. 141 volunteers from all types of libraries, all over the world, including Oklahoma, identified, selected and cataloged Internet resources using MARC, the 856 field, and AACR2. Initial reservations bandied about included: "nothing on the Internet is worth cataloging;" "everything is here today, gone tomorrow;" and "AACR2 won’t work for this." Now, after the project is over, more than 7500 records are identified and selected. Controlled vocabulary and keyword searches are possible. Though limited in describing image and other data, and though dealing with multiple versions is difficult (an old problem that just got worse since it is so easy to modify electronic files), MARC cataloging works for Internet resources.

Project participants including Carolyn Hust, Rose State, will continue selecting and cataloging Internet material. Even if you don’t do original Internet cataloging, you can use these records in your own system. Check out the InterCat Catalog at http://purl.org/net/intercat.

What about the instability of Internet sites and addresses and staff having to check all the time for dead links?

First, the selected, cataloged resources are more stable than the average Internet file. Jul also talked about PURLs, persistent URLs, a system created with this project. OCLC set up a PURL server to automatically keep track of URLs. You can register your current URL with them or another PURL server, so that if it changes, the PURL system updates, automatically keeping your database accessible. He also emphasized that libraries should catalog databases being created on their campuses (who else will?), and the computer people should be strongly encouraged to register their URLs with a PURL server.

How do you or your patrons access these Internet sites?

Ideally you could just click on the cataloged record on your OPAC and jump out on the internet immediately—taking advantage of the library-added value and integrated searching. Only one Oklahoma library represented at the meeting has that capability now. Meanwhile, some libraries make the cataloged Internet databases available on their OPACS, so that people write the Internet address (URL) down and take it over to a computer that they can search the Internet from. Other libraries are keeping a Rolodex of cataloged Internet sites until they can take the next step.

Trial of an electronic reserves room

An electronic reserves project has been underway at Rice University since mid-1994. Kay Flowers said it is part of the university-wide "Electronic Studio Project" to provide innovative classroom instruction. This should relieve students and staff of having to use reserves during Library hours, take care of theft and mutilation and unavailability of reserves already checked out; and possibly aid processing and management. The electronic reserves are set up so students can click on a thumbnail image to get into the course syllabus, contents, articles (with a copyright statement stuck in at the top), homework solutions, etc. They plan on putting a MARC 856 field in the e-reserve record so students can click on the catalog record and jump right into the reserve material.

Issues and challenges for electronic reserves included copyright, hardware, distribution, scanning (you want clarity of display while minimizing file size and image processing time), resolution, workflow, and security (do you limit access to class members because of copyright?) issues.

Flowers said, "Handpick a few good faculty to begin with." Check out Jeff Rosedale’s e-reserve page at http://www.columbia.edu/~rosedale, which provides links to vendors, copyright issues, other e-reserve projects.

On a cold day, the fire of ideas warmed workshop attendees.

—Rachel Butler
Books found talking all over the state

Her first library jobs were with the Parade and Time organizations. She's originally from New York City, but then moved to spend 11 years at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, followed by six years with the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in Oklahoma City. "I majored in special libraries, and they're all special to me!" she said laughingly.

That's Geraldine Adams, library programs supervisor, who with 25 employees, including four librarians, serves about 6,000 patrons around the state. "We serve the blind, visually impaired and learning disabled in Oklahoma. There's no charge since all of our materials are shipped free." The Library was established in 1933 as part of a national program through the Library of Congress. The Library is now part of the Department of Rehabilitation Services. This works out well, as many of the Library's patrons are also served in other ways by DRS.

Who are the customers? To be a patron, a person must have a doctor or health professional certify that they are blind or visually impaired. Patrons receive a bibliography of titles from which to choose, and are assigned a personal librarian who will discuss what kinds of books they'd like to receive each month. Of the 6,000 customers, most use the talking books program, with about 150 using the Braille collection.

What's the collection like? The Library houses more than 40,000 titles, most of which are on cassette tapes or printed in Braille. "The Braille books take up a lot of space... that's a project we need to look at in the future," says Adams.

What about collection building? The Library has about 100 volunteers who read materials for recording or help with clerical work. Volunteers record special requests—titles or textbooks that aren't already on tape. Librarians select titles from the National Library Service's (NLS, the Library's parent organization) lists of professionally read and recorded books. In addition, the Library has been creating an Oklahoma collection. This started as a staff pet project—lining up volunteers to read Oklahoma-related materials, and creating a bibliography called "Speaking of Oklahoma." In the last several years the Oklahoma collection has become very popular. Another project on the table is updating the bibliography.

What kind of circulation do you have? "We circulated over 250,000 books last year... we ship about 750 to 1,000 books per day," says Adams. Books are shipped in boxes with reversible mailing labels that the patron flips over to return a book. Materials check out for 60 days at a time. When a person becomes a Library patron, they are given a tape player to keep for as long as they're an active patron. If the machine breaks down, they may trade it in for another. The machines are outfitted with large buttons with raised symbols for play, rewind, fast forward and stop.

What is the descriptive video service? This is a two-year old fee-based service which is also proving to be popular. "They are videos that have had the action described. It's been narrated so that a blind person or visually impaired person can sit with a sighted person and be watching the same video and the sighted person doesn't have to say, 'The horse is riding off into the sunset.'" There is a $20 fee for the video service and the person must be a Library patron.

What other exciting things are going on? "A major project has been "The Hill," a grant- and donation-funded project that was unveiled last fall." It's a garden and walking path located at the Library, designed to be enjoyed by all patrons and visitors, with special features for those who are disabled or visually impaired. This project became a labor of love for Adams, who conceived the project five years ago, and was able to pull together a major collaboration of public and private organizations and individuals to make it happen. "I just got tired of looking at a dumping ground behind the Library," she says. Adams recently received an Oklahoma City Beautiful distinguished service award for "The Hill."

At the entrance is a braille tactile map of the grounds.
Hundred people attend Neil Simon presentation

On Dec. 6 playwright Neil Simon received the 1996 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award, given by the Tulsa Library Trust each year.

A black tie dinner was held in the Central Library on Friday night, and Saturday there was a public presentation, followed by a book signing. Simon spoke and answered questions at both events. About 700 people attended the program. Copies of several of Simon's works were on sale at the event, and many guests purchased books and had them signed.

Simon is "one of America's most popular and prolific playwrights." He has produced more Broadway hits than any other American playwright. In a span of 35 years, Simon has written 28 Broadway productions and 24 screenplays. He is a four-time winner of the Tony Award, for The Odd Couple, for "overall contributions to the theater", for Biloxi Blues, and for Lost in Yonkers, which also won a 1991 Pulitzer Prize.

The Helmerich Distinguished Author Award gives formal recognition, on behalf of the Tulsa community, to nationally acclaimed authors who have written a distinguished body of work and made a major contribution to the field of literature and letters. The award consists of a $20,000 prize and an engraved crystal book. Recent award winners include David McCullough (1995), Ray Bradbury (1994), Peter Mathiessen (1993), Norman Mailer (1992, and Eudora Welty (1991).

identifying layout and features of the garden. Landscaping includes statues, and trees, shrubs and flowers with special fragrance and texture along with visual appeal. Three different paving textures easily orient visitors: two semi-circular sitting areas are paved with brick, walking paths have a rough textured concrete, and eating areas with picnic tables are finished with a smooth concrete surface. "People with canes can feel the difference and locate themselves with the textures," says Adams. Handrails circle the perimeter for guidance.

"The Hill will be used in many ways, for instance spouses or friends who provide transportation to Library patrons enjoy waiting on The Hill, and it makes a great place to eat lunch for kids on the many school tours we do."

The garden was designed using ideas from Library patrons and staff, the disabled community, DRS staff, building architect John Robison and landscape architect Conne Scothorn, with the Department of Tourism & Recreation, under Adams' direction. To date about $20,000 of in-kind goods and services have been donated, with grants funding another $40,000. Additions will be made as donations are available.

We have a first for Oklahoma! "Another big project is our hosting the NLS regional meeting. For the first time this joint regional meeting is being held in Oklahoma." The conference is "Making the Connection: Information to Meet the Needs of the Future" and will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Oklahoma City, April 27-30, 1997. Glimpse some of the topics... "personal experiences of a talking book narrator, bar coding, and how blind people use the Internet, and the story of Narrative Television Network, a service invented by a blind man in Tulsa which describes old movies." These topics and many more—topics which cut across all libraries and all customers—will be discussed.

Geraldine Adams is currently very active within the network of those who serve blind people, but she has not forgotten OLA and the rest of us!

—Rachel Butler

Library Advocacy Now

° In 25 years, federal funding for libraries comes to less than the cost of one aircraft carrier (est. $3.5 billion).

° College librarians answer 94 million reference questions each year--more than three times the attendance at college football games.
Black history highlights: ideas for school announcements
from a series developed by Karen Morris
Ideas to save

Feb. 2
This poet and writer was the winner of the 1994 Spingham Medal for achievement in many fields. She is a poet, writer, educator, and human rights advocate. She wrote and read a poem for the inauguration of President Clinton. Her name is Maya Angelou. Read her autobiography _I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings_.

Feb. 5
He was the first black to receive a Nobel Prize for Peace. He was born in Detroit and educated at the UCLA and Harvard. As an official at the United Nations he helped mediate the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. His name is Ralph Bunche. Read about him in _Ralph Bunche, Fighter for Peace_.

Feb. 6
He was born and raised in Oklahoma City. His first novel won the National Book Award in 1953. The novel is about an idealistic black student whose forthrightness first destroys his college career and then jeopardizes his life. His name is Ralph W. Ellison. Read his classic novel _Invisible Man_.

Feb 12
In the year 1977, "Johnny B Goode" was one of two songs by blacks to be sent out of our solar system. The spaceship Voyager One was sent into space with copper recordings. The records contained greetings in a hundred languages, Bach's Concerto no. 2, and the songs "Dark Was the Night" by Blind Willie Johnson and "Johnny B Goode" by Chuck Berry. To read about more “firsts,” take a look at the book _Black Firsts: 2,000 Years of Extraordinary Achievement_.

Feb 14
The awards which bear her name are awarded for outstanding contributions to children's books which promote understanding and appreciation of the culture and contribution of all peoples to the American Dream. Each year, these awards to authors and illustrators also honor the life and work of her husband, a civil rights leader assassinated in 1965. She has continued his work for world peace. Her name is Coretta Scott King. Read her story in _My Life With Martin Luther King_.

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Feb 21

"Now what you hear is not a test — I’m rappin’ to the beat.
And me, the groove, and my friends are gonna try to move your feet.
... Say hip-hop, you don’t stop."

Two DJs from the Bronx in New York City are credited as the founders of recorded rap music. One was born in Jamaica and moved to the U.S. when he was 12 years old. The first recorded rap music was “Rapper’s Delight” by the Sugar Hill Gang. Read more about rap in Say It Loud! the Story of Rap Music.

Feb 23

This museum is the world’s premier museum dedicated to the works of black artists. Established in 1967, its collection includes works from America, the Caribbean, and Africa. It is the Studio Museum in Harlem (in New York City). Read more about it and black artists in the book Creative Fire.

Feb 28

Opera critics say this award-winning mezzo-soprano is headed for opera super-stardom. She may be the best ever to portray the gypsy temptress “Carmen” in that opera. She discovered her passion for opera at the age of 14. But at the start of her singing career she lost her voice and took work as a secretary. It was a year before doctors could diagnose the problem. Her heroes include Marian Anderson, Leontyne Price, and Kathleen Battle. Her name is Denyce Graves. Read more about her in this month’s Ebony magazine article “New Diva on the Block.”

Feb 29

Poet and writer Langston Hughes called this man

**Kids can’t wait** (cont. from page 1)

program she developed called “The Child Care Connection: Public Library Outreach to Caregivers.”

Though the program had been planned for two different locations, Enid and Muskogee, to allow many more librarians to attend easily despite the cold, blizzardly weather, the Jan. 14 presentation at the Muskogee Public Library had to be cancelled due to impending terrible weather (which never actually materialized).

The workshop was such a success, generating great excitement among librarians and non-librarian attendees alike, that this program will be repeated at another location during Fall 1997.

—Janet Brooks

America’s greatest Black cartoonist. In 1935 he created his best-known character “Bootsie.” He was a fierce and outspoken critic of government apathy about black lynchings. This made him a target during the McCarthy era “witch-hunts.” He died in November 1995 in Berlin, Germany, where he had lived in self-exile for 34 years. His name is Ollie Harrington. Read more about him in this month’s Ebony magazine article “The Last Laugh.”


—Karen Morris
First Amendment: Individuals supporting free flow of ideas

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

With all the challenges going on in the state of Oklahoma, it is interesting to reflect on the first amendment, its content and use, and consider the individuals who align themselves in defense of freedom of speech and freedom from the imposition of religious views on a community at large.

"There is no doubt that we live in a dangerous world. Yet, I can imagine none so dangerous as a world in which ideas cannot flow freely. The free flow of ideas is our most basic right. A right so fundamental that those individuals who framed the Constitution and Bill of Rights placed it in the most primary and prominent position, a bulwark against the intolerance of their day," says Joyce Meskis, the winner of the 1995 PEN/Newman’s Own First Amendment Award. This award recognizes extraordinary actions in defense of freedom of expression, and is supported by PEN American Center, an association of writers, and Newman’s Own, founded by actor Paul Newman in 1982. It currently carries a stipend of $25,000.

Meskis goes on to say, "over the many years that I have worked in libraries and book stores, I have had many challenges to all kinds of materials. Despite living in a pluralistic society, booksellers and librarians are constantly challenged by individuals who are intolerant of the ideas of others. In every case the rationale that is presented is that society will be better off to get rid of the offensive material. If those individuals only recognized that their own ideas are safe to be freely accessed and debated because of the basic right to freedom of expression in our country! To limit that access is to diminish each of our positions in the end." Meskis is a former American Booksellers Association president and owner of the Tattered Cover bookstore in Colorado.

The very first recipient of the PEN/Newman’s Own award, Claudia Johnson, a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, has written Stifled Laughter: One Woman’s Story About Fighting Censorship. She tells about fighting censorship in two small Florida towns, Lake City and Live Oak. Stifled Laughter is the chosen title because the author contends that some censors lack a sense of humor: body functions, language, and embarrassing or sexual predicaments become major points of contention. In Lake City’s Columbia Senior High School, “The Miller’s Tale” and Lysistrata were removed from the classroom (and the humanities course that had included those readings was dropped the following year). The books were objected to because the translation of Chaucer used the words “tart” and “ass,” and Lysistrata promoted women’s lib and was “super crude.” Claudia Johnson and other parents fought to keep the books in the classroom while allowing for the use of alternate texts for those who would be offended by the original assignment.

The Lake City case was lost and, after the house the Johnsons were building outside the city burned under suspicious circumstances, they moved to Live Oak. Once again, objections were raised to classroom materials, this time to Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men. Johnson was tired of battling, and had work of her own to do, but once again got involved. This time the material was retained.

The contrast between the two situations provides strong support for having policies of selection and use criteria in place and for maintaining dialog between those who can explain why the materials should be retained and those who want removal.

—Edith Schneebberger

Nominations sought

The Honors and Awards Committee of the Alumni Association of the University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies is soliciting nominations for its Award of Merit. Any person who has received a Masters degree in Library Science from OU may be eligible for this award if:

1. The person has generated an active interest in the School and/or;
2. The person has made an effective and innovative contribution to the library profession and/or,
3. The person has contributed to the professional literature.

Please contact Melissa Huffman, Rose State College LRC, 6420 SE 15th Street, Midwest City, OK 73110 for a nomination form. Phone 405-733-7538, fax 405-736-0260 or email mhuffman@ms.rose.cc.ok.us

Nominations are due by March 15, 1997.

Oklahoma: First in the nation!
Did you know Oklahoma is the first state in the nation to certify library support staff? The first classes for public library staff certification—for both librarians and support staff—began in January and are being taught all over the state.
Opportunities for bonding and sharing

Wanted: volunteers (anybody!) who'd like to join other librarians in presenting a "new reference book" at the OLA/MPLA Congrference at Shangri-La on Thursday, May 1 at 1:30-3:00. Review a book, an electronic reference product... Here's your chance to make a contribution to a program always greatly appreciated by attendees and fun for panel members! Contact R.D. Bell, Rogers University Library, 700 N. Greenwood, Tulsa, OK 74106, call 918-594-8136 or email uclibrdb@lib.uct.edu

People and Places

PAT ZACHARY began her new position as Library Media/ITV Coordinator at the State Department of Education on Jan. 2. In May 1996 she retired as a school librarian in Walters.

DESIREE WEBBER, previously Children's Librarian at Moore Public Library, started in January as a Library Consultant at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

In December, LINDA SAFERITE began as the new Executive Director of Tulsa City-County Library System. Linda was previously director of the Ft. Collins, CO, Public Library where she raised funds for and remodeled the library, and promoted and formed a partnership with the local community college for a joint 31,000 sq.ft library. She also has been director of the Scottsdale, AZ, Public Library from 1980 to 1993, and spent 10 years as regional administrator of the County of Los Angeles Public Library. She has been honored with the Arizona State Library Association's Distinguished Service Award in 1993, the Leadership in Intergovernmental Relations Award from the City of Scottsdale in 1991, and the Arizona State Library Association's Librarian of the Year Award in 1990.

OLA Executive Board takes action at monthly meetings

NOVEMBER 15, 1996

The OLA Executive Board met at the Norman Public Library, and took the following actions:

- Approved the minutes of the October 18 meeting as mailed.
- Accepted the treasurer's report for OLA as presented by Jeanette McQuitty, but requested clarification and correction of two entries.
- Accepted the OASLMS monthly financial report as presented by Sue McAlister.
- Approved a request from Peggy Cook to apply for a $500 MPLA grant. This grant would be used for the Dewey 21 conference program.
- Reviewed and considered the document "Proposed Changes to the OLA Constitution Bylaws 1997" submitted by Gerald Hickman. Recommended two wording changes and accepted the document as changed.
- Reviewed and approved a workshop proposal from the Automation Roundtable entitled "Hot Stuff! Hot Visions, Jacks & HTML Tricks and Traps."
- Reviewed and approved a workshop proposal from the Children & Young People's Roundtable on Storytelling.
- Considered a request from an Enid elementary school to use the Sequoyah Book Award seal on their home page. The Board decided that more specific information is needed before a final decision is made.
- Considered an invitation from ALA/LAMA to be a member of the Council of Library Affiliates (COLA). It was decided to have a representative from OLA attend the LAMA/COLA meeting at ALA midwinter conference as an observer and report back to the Board with a recommendation.
- Considered a request from the Center for the Book to include a flyer about their book award in the OLA bulk mailing. The Board approved the request for this year only.

DECEMBER 20, 1996

At its meeting at the Guthrie Public Library, the Board took the following actions:

- Approved the minutes of the November 15 meeting as mailed.
-Accepted the treasurer's report for OLA as submitted by Jeanette McQuitty, but requested clarification and correction of two entries.
- Accepted the OASLMS monthly financial report as presented by Sue McAlister.
- Approved a request from Peggy Cook to apply for a $500 MPLA grant. This grant would be used for the Dewey 21 conference program.
- Reviewed and considered the document "Proposed Changes to the OLA Constitution Bylaws 1997" submitted by Gerald Hickman. Recommended two wording changes and accepted the document as changed.
- Reviewed and approved a workshop proposal from the Automation Roundtable entitled "Hot Stuff! Hot Visions, Jacks & HTML Tricks and Traps."
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- Considered a request from an Enid elementary school to use the Sequoyah Book Award seal on their home page. The Board decided that more specific information is needed before a final decision is made.
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- Considered a request from the Center for the Book to include a flyer about their book award in the OLA bulk mailing. The Board approved the request for this year only.

—Karen Marriott
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