State Librarian Robert L. Clark Retires

After more than 24 years as State Librarian and State Archivist, Robert L. Clark has announced his retirement from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, effective October 1, 2000.

His near quarter of a century as ODL Director has coincided with "an unprecedented time" in the development of library and information services. "The way technology is impacting library services is still amazing to me," Clark said. "I feel very fortunate that I've been in a position to help our state's citizens benefit from these new information technologies."

Clark, a native of Krebs, Oklahoma, was hired as the agency's director in July, 1976. During his tenure he has headed two statewide Governor's Conferences where Oklahoma citizens recommended improvements to their library services. He oversaw the implementation of many of those improvements; championed preservation programs, government openness laws, and intellectual freedom issues; supervised the use of federal library funds in the state; and lead a strategic planning process that redefined the agency and its role in the information age.

Prior to being hired as director, Clark was first employed by the agency from 1969 to 1973 as head of the Division of Archives and Records and then as data processing coordinator. One of his first projects for the agency was anything but high tech. In 1969, he spearheaded an effort to save many of the state's important historical documents. Since 1952, the state library's official records storage facility had been an old detention hospital, known as the "pest house." A fire in 1969 gutted two rooms of the building and highlighted the need for improved facilities and more resources to service the state's temporary and permanent records.

"We had very limited resources then, so we had to work with the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Oklahoma City Fire Department, and a group of volunteers to move the documents from the pest house to safer facilities," Clark said.

Clark coordinated the rescue and publicized the problem. Documents from territorial days, WPA records, early correspondence from attorney generals, and other irreplaceable documents were rescued for posterity thanks to the effort. "I'm still proud of that," Clark said. "If those documents had been destroyed, we would have lost a large part of our state's history." He said the crisis lead to a stronger archives and records program for the state.

Clark detoured to Mississippi from 1973 to 1976, serving as assistant director of public services for the Jackson Metropolitan Library System and the director of the Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System.

In 1976, he was selected from 20 applicants to head the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Upon his return to Oklahoma, one of his first actions was moving all of the state's Interlibrary Loan Activity to the automated OCLC environment, where millions of records could be accessed to help locate materials for patrons. Federal library funds were used to improve this ILL service, and Clark said these federal funds have made a big difference in the quality of information services and access in rural states like Oklahoma.

In 1979, Clark testified before the National Commission on Library and Information Services to help fend off an effort to restrict how State Libraries could use these funds. Proposed changes would have concentrated dollars in urban areas. "The changes proposed would have made it more difficult to assist libraries and their patrons in the rural parts of our state. Luckily, we prevailed, and each State Library can determine the best way (Cont. on p. 38)
State Librarian Retires (cont. from p. 37)

to use their federal funding for statewide library services."

Clark has also promoted the use of federal funds to assist the disadvantaged populations in Oklahoma's state institutions. "Residents of correctional, mental health, and juvenile institutions have all benefited from improved library services thanks to these funds," Clark said.

Clark also worked to increase State Aid payments to Oklahoma public libraries, and to make more libraries in the state eligible to receive these payments. State Aid has increased from approximately $125,000 in the late 1970s to $1.6 million today.

Governor's Conferences on Libraries and Information Services held in 1978 and 1990 lead to new and improved programs for the state's library community. The creation of a statewide friends group, Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma, and a statewide adult literacy program were two outcomes from the 1978 conference. The 1990 conference lead to a recodification of the state's library statutes, and a successful election to improve the options citizens have for funding local library services.

In addition to advocating for public libraries, Clark worked to improve citizen access to government information. During his directorship, the agency initiated two significant programs targeting improved access to state government documents. In 1978, Governor Boren signed legislation creating the Oklahoma Publications Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is a repository of state agency publications printed at taxpayer expense. The publications are housed at ODL and at depository libraries across the state.

"This Clearinghouse works like the federal government documents depository program. It assures that state information will be available now and in the future for our citizens," Clark said.

Twenty years later, in 1998, the agency took the lead in improving access to state government information online. ODL provides a directory of finding aids, and a special search service that indexes all state government websites. "Our mission to connect people with government information remains the same, no matter what the media," he said.

Enhancing access to state government information via the web was one recommendation that emerged out of a comprehensive strategic planning process conducted by the agency in 1995 and 1996.

This process gave the agency new initiatives and direction in the Information Age. Other projects addressed in the plan include a statewide contract for online reference resources, and extensive training of the state’s public library community in the use of information technologies.

The statewide contract includes access to full-text articles from more than 1800 magazine and journal titles. "These articles are available to all types of libraries in all areas of the state." Clark said. "This has had a tremendous impact on equity of access. Libraries that struggled to pay for subscriptions to even a few magazine titles can now offer their patrons access to millions of online articles."

State appropriated funds help pay for these databases, and Clark said state funds also created and maintain a statewide online catalog. Interlibrary Loan entered a new age with the online catalog since even the smallest libraries could request materials directly from other libraries in the state.

Getting the resources to patrons also meant training local librarians in the use of computers, the Internet, and online reference products. "Our team of consultants spent the 1990s preparing public librarians around the state to harness these new technologies. It has been a major accomplishment of this agency," he said.

Another accomplishment of the agency involves the strange story of the Academy Award winning film, "The Tin Drum."

After an Oklahoma County Judge ruled in 1997 that "The Tin Drum" contained obscenity, Oklahoma City Police confiscated copies of the video, including a copy owned by the Metropolitan Library System. When the Video Software Dealers Association (VSDA) sued the county and city, Clark felt compelled to act. ODL filed to enter the case as an intervener plaintiff.

When the federal judge granted ODL's intervention, Clark said it set a precedent for state library agencies. "That ruling meant that ODL was granted legal standing in representing access and censorship concerns on the local level. So, our intervention may have ramifications in some future censorship case."

The "Tin Drum" story had a happy ending for libraries and citizens when the VSDA won its case and the film was placed back on shelves.

Clark says his retirement from ODL represents a happy ending, too. It's a time to reflect on the aggregate of many years and many experiences.

"I was 31 when I was hired as ODL director," Clark said and friends kidded me and called me the 'Boy State Librarian.' Well I'm now third in seniority among the state librarians in the county, and I've seen our profession move from card catalogs to information available in real time. I've seen the difference a good board and a good staff can make in improving the lives of Oklahomans. I've been blessed. This boy is lucky."
Clark is interviewed by OETA Director Bob Allen during the television authority’s 1980 fundraising festival. ODL staff volunteered to man phones and the agency offered copies of The Directory of Oklahoma to encourage contributions to OETA.

Some members of Oklahoma’s 1979 White House Conference delegation staged a reunion at the 1990 Governor’s Conference. Standing: Gail Miller, Altus; Clark; and Marcus Salazar, Oklahoma City. Seated: Charlie Lou Rouse, Stillwater; Helen Holmes, Guthrie; Marilyn Vesely, 1978 Governor’s Conference Coordinator; and Pat Woodrum, Tulsa.

In 1979, Clark represented the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) during testimony before the National Commission on Library and Information Services. Clark’s service on the COSLA Legislative Committee helped State Libraries retain more control over the use of federal library funds in their states.
State Librarians Never Retire, They Just Recycle

Tips and Ruminations from Bob Clark

I can’t believe I’m so lucky to have been a state librarian during the last quarter of the 20th century. I could not have imagined when I was in library school how fast technology would shape our profession and personal lives.

I have an old purple-colored book with white Dewey numbers handwritten on the spine. It smells funny and I bet my grandkids will someday ask me if it’s “rare.” Heck, they may think all books are rare someday.

I just wish I would have kept all of those hand typed catalog cards ODL dumped years ago. They would have made great wallpaper. And how about those old catalog card cabinets? I bought some to leave to the grandchildren because there’s some great potential there.

Cumulative Book Index shelves make terrific workbenches, drawing tables and greenhouse shelves. Teletype machines can be converted into dependable fishing boat anchors. (Save your typewriters, though. You never know when you’ll need to send a private communiqué.)

I have converted a camper into a bookmobile, and saw one a while back that was converted back into a camper. If I could find an old circulation date stamp I could use it to date the back of old family photos. Those 16 mm film cannisters make great bases for potted plants, but the only part of a 16 mm projector that’s still useable is the bulb, if it isn’t burned out.

Now I have to figure out what to do with a retired State Librarian.
I always enjoy Chicago ALA conferences, and this one was no exception. It is such a good city to visit! This was my last chance to represent Oklahoma on Council, and that has been my honor and pleasure. This summer, the Council spent a lot of time discussing core values and outsourcing, without making much progress on either topic. Those discussions will continue. Aside from those issues, I can report the following:

- ALA is in very good financial condition.
- Next fiscal year’s budget will be $46,003,000.
- The Intellectual Freedom Committee reported that they made good progress on its three goals for this year—Continue to Stand by Our Principles, Focus on Educating the General Public, and Find New Partners. They have developed the “Libraries & the Internet Toolkit” and a brochure including a checklist and ideas for library staff working with community leaders. IFC is seeking a partnership with the American Society of Newspaper Editors to publish a supplement on libraries, which would be distributed nationwide. National Library Day will be May 1, 2001.
- The Committee on Legislation has formalized a UCITA Taskforce to assist the Washington Office staff in developing effective state lobbying teams to fight UCITA. Their web address is <www.ala.org/washoff/ucita.html>.
- ALA adopted a resolution urging Congress to fully fund the Government Printing Office appropriation request for FY 2001 in order to continue the GPO Access and Federal Depository Library services.
- Sara Long completed her year as President, with a report of her activities and initiatives. Her theme, “Libraries Build Community,” focused on encouraging librarians to step up their efforts to form partnerships with other community organizations. She also worked on efforts to recruit future librarians, and on more and better public relations for libraries of all types. She highlighted after-school library programs with awards. At the ALTA National Advocacy Honor Roll Banquet on July 7, three of Oklahoma’s honorees were in attendance—Lillian Norberg, Nancy Anthony, and Sally Frasier; Phil Dessauer’s widow Virginia was also able to attend, along with a good contingent from ODL, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Muskogee. Nancy Kranich, incoming President, is going to place emphasis on “Libraries: the Cornerstone of Democracy.” The August issue of American Libraries will include a 16-page booklet which will provide libraries with ideas for connecting users to helpful voting information.
- Council voted to develop a mentoring program under the guidance of the Council Orientation Committee.
- The new ALA 5-year “@ your library” campaign should be a real winner! This phrase is available to all libraries now to start using in any way. (They recommend American Typewriter typeface.) There will be more information and ideas available later. ALA Graphics will be using it for posters, and we urged Peggy Barber to also provide short PSA’s which can be used locally.
- As mentioned, the most time-consuming item on the Council agenda was “core values.” Following the Hawaii outsourcing problem and the Education Summit, the ALA President appointed a task force to clarify the core values of the profession. The Task Force presented their recommendations to adopt the following:
  - Connection of people to ideas
  - Assurance of free and open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works
  - Commitment to literacy and learning
  - Respect for the individuality and the diversity of people
  - Freedom for all people to form, to hold, and to express their own beliefs
  - Preservation of the human record
  - Excellence in professional service to our communities
  - Formation of partnerships to advance these values

There were dissenters who believed that key values were missing, that the document had not had sufficient input from throughout the country and from ALA’s divisions and committees, or that these were inadequate in some other way. The outcome was that the Council dismissed the taskforce with thanks and asked ALA leadership to open further discussion and debate on this subject before a final list of values is adopted. If you have ideas, please forward them to Dr. Ed Johnson, OSU, Stillwater, our new Oklahoma Councilor. The topic might be a good one for discussion with your staff or board.

- ALA now has more than 60,000 members for the first time. A proposal to increase institutional dues was not adopted, feeling that we need all the participation from institutions we can get, when an increase might scare some off.
- The Committee on Education is working on ALA certification programs for post-masters degree librarians. The recommendations will be presented at the next Midwinter meeting of Council.

At its meeting in January, 1999, Council asked ALA to conduct a study concerning the impact of outsourcing and privatization on library services, it contracted with Texas Woman’s University School of Library and Information Studies last fall. The report was presented to Council at this meeting. The team found no evidence that outsourcing per se represents a threat to library governance, or to the role of the library in protecting the First Amendment.
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Navigating the Information Future

This is such a great time to be in libraries and work with information technology. Librarians have many varied skills and types of work, but the goal is to make information and materials accessible to our target groups. What a treat!

Several OLA divisions and committees have hit the ground running with projects for this year. The quality of our volunteer leadership is impressive. Their dedication and enthusiasm in planning workshops, programs and ongoing committee work is wonderful.

The challenges of information technology are exciting. Librarians are pulled in many directions in our day-to-day jobs, long-range planning, materials selection, acquisition, cataloging, preservation, reference, interlibrary loan, storytime, public policy development, etc. In addition, Oklahoma librarians need to become mentors and develop ways to encourage new librarians.

Additional librarians, especially library media specialists, and library technicians are needed throughout the state. It is really up to us to encourage those with whom we come in contact to become a part of our profession.

A recent article by Mary Lord (U.S. News Online: http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/000612/lib.htm) asked “Where Have All the Librarians Gone?” Among the locations ex-librarians have been found are retirement, other information technology businesses needing librarians’ many varied skills, and the classroom where the work is not as strenuous. Oklahoma has a shortage of school media specialists right now. By 2005, researchers predict a need for nearly 25,000 media specialists in the United States. (Over 59,000 new or replacement jobs are projected in librarianship by 2006.)

Evan St. Liher, in “The Boomer Brain Drain: The Last of a Generation?” Library Journal 125:8 (1 May 2000): 38-42, tracks the number of librarians jobs compared with librarians seeking employment from 1969 to 1999 at ALA conferences. The gap between the number of jobs and job seekers has grown sharply in the last three years.

Why did you become a librarian? Several surveys have found that the majority of librarians worked as a student library aide during high school or college and then kind of fell into the profession.

What do these librarians have in common? Sharon Saulmon, Carmelita Thompson, Edwin Wiles (OCU), Evelyn Schmidt (Panhandle State), Cheryl Sultles (Integris Baptist), Charlotte French (Oklahoma City Community College), Steve Skidmore (Oregon), Glenda Shepler, Marilyn Ealick (Houston). These are just the people who I know in Ponca City High School when I was there who became librarians. Most of us belonged to the Library Club, meeting after school and going on trips. Our sponsor Elva Curtis made that special effort to help us learn about libraries and resources. She never had a clue that we became librarians, but she was definitely an influence.

Of course, we all had other role models. (My great-aunt was an elementary school librarian. My grandfather was a first-grade teacher.) But we never really know how our support may inspire someone to consider librarianship as a career.

We can all take an extra minute to explain librarianship to a student worker or a colleague anticipating a career change, planting career seeds for future consideration.

This year we have an ad hoc committee to develop strategies for increasing awareness and to raise awareness of career information about librarianship. Please send Jan Sanders or me your ideas or suggestions as we “Navigate the Information Future.”

—Sharon Saulmon

ALA Councilor (cont. from p. 41)

rights of the public. That finding set off a good bit of discussion, as you can imagine: Council voted to receive the report, which is located on the Web at <www.ala.org/alaorg/ors/outsourcing/>. This subject, too, will come up again at future meetings.

Another task force has been working on electronic meeting participation for ALA. It recommended that ALA should continue supporting chat-based tools so members can experience real-time online meetings. Guidelines will be developed, and the scope of participation defined prior to the next conference.

Another resolution to require socially responsible investment of all ALA funds failed in a close vote. The Endowment Trustees are resisting the idea of limiting the money managers to certain funds, and so far, the majority on Council has agreed.

A new standing committee on Literacy is being formed to work closely with the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services.

Finally, the findings of a task force in LITA on privacy and confidentiality in the electronic environment are available at <www.lita.org/docs/privcon/appendix/html>. They found that most states protect confidentiality of library records to some degree, mostly circulation and registration records. It is not clear that those laws protect the privacy of those using online resources. The task force recommends that ALA develop model privacy policies, instructional materials, and “best practices” documents for libraries. Further, that all libraries adopt a privacy statement on web pages and post privacy policies which cover the issues of privacy in internet use as accessed through the library's services.

Overall, I feel ALA is providing some valuable leadership in areas of vital interest to libraries, and I have enjoyed being part of this movement.

—Jan Keene

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In July at the Annual Conference, the American Library Association honored seven Oklahoma Friends of Libraries: Lillian Born Norberg and Sally Frasier of Tulsa; Gail Miller, Altus; Nancy Anthony, Oklahoma City; and Robert Segal, McAlester. Charles Ward and Phil Dessauer of Tulsa received awards posthumously.

At an Honor Roll Banquet during the Conference in Chicago, they received a specially-designed pin as a thank you for their dedication to library advocacy. Also, the names of all seven honorees will be listed on a plaque that will be displayed at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries in Oklahoma City.

The National Advocacy Honor Roll recognizes those who have actively supported and strengthened library services at the local, state or national levels over the last 100 years. Honorees are advocates who have led major initiatives or sustained efforts to enhance library development and/or public awareness.

Sally Frasier of Tulsa is a devoted advocate for the Tulsa Public Library with service on the Tulsa City-County Library Commission since 1985 and as Board Chairman from 1992-1994. She helped lead the 1998 Tulsa City-County Library Bond and Millage Campaign, which received the largest voter approval in library history and resulted in remodeling and refurbishing 23 libraries in Tulsa County. She also served on the Urban Libraries Council Board for 6 years. In 1998 Frasier was elected to the Tulsa Library Hall of Fame. She is a long time member of Friends of the Tulsa Public Library and of Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma.

Lillian Born Norberg of Tulsa has filled every role that a library advocate can fill. She was among the original Friends of the Tulsa Public Library and Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma (FOLIO). She established the Friends of the Tulsa Public Library in 1957 and helped found the Tulsa Library Trust. Norberg also served FOLIO as its first president and has served on the Tulsa Library Commission and the Tulsa Library Trust. She still sits on the Boards of the Friends of the Tulsa Public Library and the Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma.

The late Phil Dessauer of Tulsa was a member of the Tulsa City-County Library Commission from 1969 to 1993. He was involved in public library work nationally, serving as President of the Urban Libraries Board in 1989-1999. He was elected to the Library Hall of Fame in 1982 and was honored with the Oklahoma Library Association's Citizen's Recognition Award in 1987.

When Charles Ward passed away recently, he was the honored President of the Friends of the Tulsa Public Library and on the Board of FOLIO. His devotion to Oklahoma's libraries came after an outstanding career as an aide to former U.S. speaker of the House Carl Albert and former Senator David Boren. Ward served three terms as President of the Friends of the Tulsa Public Library.

Nancy Anthony of Oklahoma City, long-time executive director of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, has long been an avid supporter of libraries. A member of the Metropolitan Library Commission since 1977, she has served as both Vice-Chair and Chair of the Commission. She developed election strategy that resulted in the first successful millage levy increase for the Metropolitan System since 1965. Her latest fight to protect the intellectual freedom of the system involved the Tin Drum, an Academy Award winning movie. She has also helped form "friends of the library groups." Anthony says she is a library advocate because she grew up going to libraries and she knows how important they are to people who want to get an education or improve themselves.

Gail Miller of Altus is a long time supporter of Oklahoma's libraries. He was President of FOLIO and continues to chair the Library Friends Seed Grants Committee. It is through his efforts that Folio helps new Library Friends to organize. He is the father of Kathy Hale, the Director of the Southern Plains Library System.

Robert Segal of McAlester is the immediate Past President of FOLIO and has served FOLIO and Oklahoma's libraries tirelessly. An active member of McAlester Friends, Segal has worked on legislative issues important to Oklahoma's libraries and was a leader on the task force that brought the internet to public libraries. Also, he served on the Board of Trustees of the Southeastern Oklahoma Library System.

Tell me a story...

"Tellabration (www.tellabration.org), part of a worldwide evening of benefit storytelling, will be held in Oklahoma City on Saturday, Nov. 18, 8p.m. on the campus of Oklahoma City Community College.

Some of the finest storytellers in Oklahoma will share their tales to warm hearts and stir the imagination. Just as the stories warm hearts, the group will be helping to warm hands as well. Donations of gloves will be given to local schools and charities for area children. Sponsors for this storytelling event for adults include the statewide storytelling organization, The Territory Tellers, Full Circle Bookstore, Oklahoma City Community College and the National Storytelling Network.

Tickets are $5.00 and may be purchased from:
Marilyn Hudson, Producer
c/o Tellabration 2000
318 Sunburst
Norman,OK 73069
405-321-4451 (h), 405-424-1437 (w)
OL A Executive Board Actions

May 19, 2000

The executive board met at The Village Public Library in OKC.

- Conference projected income was $15,000.
- OLA agreed to participate in the Oklahoma Partnership for Public Deliberation.
- OLA to donate $500 to the Spectrum Scholarship Fund.
- Board accepted the Sites Committee’s recommendation of the Renaissance Hotel/Myrriad Convention Center in OKC for the annual conference in 2001.
- OLA will write a letter of support for the expansion of the Cartwright Library for state archives.

July 21, 2000

Southern Oaks Public Library in OKC was the site of the OLA July board meeting.

- A certificate of appreciation for retiring state librarian, Bob Clark, was approved and will be presented at a later date.
- Workshops were approved for “Computers: Up Close and Personal” on October 3, 2000 by the Technology and Electronic Resources Roundtable and “Taking Control: A Workshop on Authority Control” put on by the Technical Services Roundtable on September 29, 2000.

August 18, 2000

The board met at the remodeled Edmond Public Library in August.

- Purchase of 1000 “@” bookmarks was approved.
- Discussion and approval of an increase for OLA Lobbyist Oliver Delaney from $3500 to $5000.
- Approved the 2000-2001 OLA budget which included increased travel costs for ALA/MPLA representatives, a 5% salary increase for the OLA Executive Director, more phone lines for the OLA office, storage space for OLA archives, increased printing budget and purchase of software for the office.
- A salary increase was approved contingent on grant funding for Let’s Talk About It Oklahoma coordinator, Jennifer Kidney to be effective January 1, 2001.
There's a Whole Lot of Building Going On

Library event recalls history

On Aug. 16, 1900, civic leaders, public officials and others who cherished books and reading gathered at the corner of what was then Third Street and Robinson for an elaborate affair. Oklahoma City had received $25,000 from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie to build a public library and Third and Robinson was the chosen site. On that hot August day 100 years ago, our enlightened predecessors were assembled to cheer Carnegie, his gift and the laying of the library's cornerstone.

According to "Proceedings at the Dedication of the Carnegie Public Library," the ceremonies began with "appropriate addresses" by Sidney Clarke, Mayor Lee Van Winkle, Selwyn Douglas and Capt. D.F. Stiles. Following the speeches, the prominent Dr. Harry Walker read his original poem, "The Home of Books." This two-stanza work describes a public library and is as timely now as it was then. It begins: "The house of books holds all that was, that is, that should be, true of man." Mayor Van Winkle laid the cornerstone on that memorable day. Then, "Proceedings" tells us, four ladies performed a "beautiful ceremony."

If only there had been video cameras, we would know exactly how Mary Milner, Mrs. Floyd S. Lamb, Mrs. Hector Lee Ball and Virginia Streeter enacted their part! A newspaper account recalls that they anointed the ground where the library would stand with corn, the symbol for plenty; wine, representing joy and gladness; and oil, for peace.

Those early library supporters launched this community's first public library building for the 20th century. As the centennial of that event approached, we recognized a "magical moment" not to be missed. That "moment" was, of course, Aug. 16, 2000. What better date to break ground for the MAPS-funded Downtown Library Learning Center, a technologically smart library for the 21st century?

What better way to do it than by re-enacting a precious piece of this town's history?

Oklahoma City Mayor Kirk Humphreys and Councilwoman Ann Simank lead the festivities, beginning at 4 p.m. at the corner of Park and Hudson, where the library learning center will be built. Penny McCaleb, Metropolitan Library Commission chairwoman, read Dr. Walker's poem. As for anointing the site with corn, oil and wine, members of Oklahoma City's Philomathea Club were asked to do the honors.

In 1898, it was local Philomatheans who resolved to

(Cont. on p. 47)
Censorship in the Schools: What is it? How do you cope?

What is censorship?
Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups or officials—find objectionable or dangerous. It is seldom more complex than someone’s saying: “No, you cannot read that magazine or book or see that film because I object to it!”

Who censors?
Studies have shown that in a school setting it is most often the parent who demands censorship; but in some cases pressures favoring censorship may come from a teacher or an administrator. Frequently, the single occurrence of an offending word will trigger the complaint. In other cases, social values or sex-related themes will be the focus of the objection.

Why is censorship harmful?
Censorship is harmful because it results in the opposite of true education and learning. In the process of acquiring knowledge and searching for truth, students can learn to discriminate—to make decisions rationally and logically in light of the evidence. By suppressing all materials containing ideas or themes with which they do not agree, censors produce a sterile conformity and a lack of intellectual and emotional growth in students.

ALA’s position
The American Library Association opposes censorship and urges you to do so, too. We believe the library media center is protected from censorship by the Bill of Rights—specifically, by the First Amendment, which guards freedom of expression.

What should you be doing now?
Don’t wait for a confrontation over censorship. There are concrete ways which you can take—beginning today!

- Ask the American Library Association for guidance and a model policy on the selection of instructional materials and the handling of complaints.
- Develop your own selection policy in cooperation with your colleagues and get it approved by your school system’s governing body.
- Keep lines of communication open so colleagues, parents and leaders in the community will know what you are trying to accomplish through library media center programs.
- Maintain your own awareness through regular participation and in professional activities. (ALA’s American Association of School Librarians deals not only with censorship and intellectual freedom, but all those issues that concern you as a library media specialist.)

What should you do when the crisis comes?
When a complaint comes in, remain calm, and require that your established procedures by followed. Be courteous to the individual complainant or group. How you communicate is extremely important. Respond with dignity and show fairness in your attitude. As soon as possible, present school authorities with a written factual account of the situation. In outlining your position on the issues, remember to reaffirm the principles of intellectual freedom. Even if the item in dispute is offensive to one or several (parents, colleagues, local citizens), it has a right to be represented in the collection if it is within the scope of your selection policy. Do your homework. Review the reasons the title was selected for the collection (professional reviews, educational significance, timeliness, etc).

Where can you go for help?
Never panic. Help is only a phone call away. The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom maintains a full-time program to assist the professional confronted with a censorship problem. The American Library Association, working in cooperation with state and local professional organizations, can provide expert advice, educational materials for distribution in the community, and other support.

Call or write:
Office for Intellectual Freedom
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Phone: 800-545-2433, ext. 4223
Fax: 312-280-4227
E-mail: oif@ala.org

The American Library Association wants you to know: We’re here to help! “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate...in our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate.” — Justice Abe Fortas, in Tinker v. Des Moines Community School District

—ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom
August 2000

Oklahoma City Building (cont. from p. 46)

establish and maintain a free public library. According to "Proceedings:" "Oklahoma City was at that time suffering from the general depression which affected the entire country, and it was by no means an easy task to interest the people in an enterprise that did not directly add to their material interests. But courage and perseverance were not wanting in that little club of pioneer women, who craved the environments of a higher intellectual life."

They raised several hundred dollars from local businessmen, invested the money in books and opened a public library in temporary quarters. Then, that tenacious group carried the torch during the campaign to secure Carnegie’s $25,000 gift. At the time, the club’s membership consisted of Oklahoma City’s "leading literary ladies."

Today the club has dwindled in number, but its few members remain keenly interested in libraries. They, along with Humphreys and McCaleb, gave the Downtown Library Learning Center an inspired beginning.

—Julia Fresonke, PIO/MLS
People and Places

Gary Phillips of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries decided to go back to a public library and to Louisiana at the end of last May. He took over the directorship of the Madison Parish Library in Tallulah and said he'd love to hear from you all. His e-mail address is gphilip鹈ican.state.lib.la.us.

Neta Cox, Government Documents and Reference Librarian, at Southeastern Oklahoma State University has left to be a Medical Librarian at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. Sandra Thomas, ILL and Reference Librarian has taken over her duties on an interim basis.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University also has a new Documents Librarian. Her name is Jeannie Moss.

Linda Levy, acting director of the Metropolitan Library System, is leaving Oklahoma City for a move to Colorado where her husband has taken a new position. Linda will be leaving at the end of September.

Anne Prestamo of Oklahoma State University completed her Ph.D. in Educational Technology.

Susan Gilley has taken over the post as Administrative Librarian at the Cartwright Library in the state capitol building. Marilyn Jacobs has stepped down to work on a part-time basis.

The University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies has had several changes. Dr. Dan P. Wallace has joined as the new director. Associate Professor, Connie Van Fleet and Visiting Assistant Professor Marie Landry have also come to Norman. Both Claire McInerney and Ron Day have left the faculty.

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