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Oklahoma MPLA Board Report

February 22, 2006

Submitted by David Oberhelman, Interim Oklahoma Library Association Representative

OLA Conference 2006

Join us for the 99th Annual OLA Annual Conference to be held March 29-April 1, 2006 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Tulsa. This year's theme is "Just So You Know" and Bill Knotts is the keynote speaker at the opening session at 9 a.m. on Thursday, March 30. Knotts is the County Librarian at the Jefferson County Library in Colorado—one of the largest public libraries in Colorado. He has experience to share and stories to tell about speaking your voice—becoming an advocate—about making things happen that are important to you. He has been very active in Colorado as a library leader and champion.

The Saints and Sinners of Okay County Selected for State One Book Project

The Saints and Sinners of Okay County by Dana Dunbar has been chosen as the Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma Book for 2006. Dunbar's novel is the third book selected in for the annual statewide reading and discussion program, an Oklahoma Centennial project designed to highlight the literature and history of our state as we approach our 100th birthday in 2007. The Oklahoma Humanities Council and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries are the main sponsors of the reading initiative with additional funding provided by Sonic, America's Drive-In, the Gelvin Foundation, and other businesses and organizations.

House and Senate Bills on Children's/YA books with "Homosexual" or "Sexually Explicit" Themes

The OLA Legislative Committee is bringing our attention two companion bills that have been introduced, one in the House (HB 2158, sponsored by Rep. Kern) and one in the Senate (SB 177, sponsored by Sen. Aldridge) that have the potential to cause many problems for libraries in Oklahoma, particularly public libraries. The key text of the House bill is as follows:

"The Oklahoma Department of Libraries Board shall not grant or distribute any state funds that are allocated to libraries on a formula basis to any library, library district, or library system unless the library has taken action to place all children and young adult books and materials that are homosexually themed or sexually explicit in an adult or special area in the library and the library has a policy in place to limit distribution of such books and material to adults only."

These bills have been assigned to committee, and the OLA Legislative Committee is working on a response strategy that would address some of the problematic issues these bills raise for libraries.

TABOR

An issue looming is the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" or TABOR initiative that could be on the state ballot in November. It is a program that could lead to across-the-board cuts in state funding and would be very detrimental to libraries. TABOR would limit state spending to no

more than the lesser of increase in population + inflation rate or actual revenues. In this formula, the inflation rate is based on the consumer price index (which looks at costs of housing, fuel, and food), not items that form a large part of the state budget like education, health care, or the correction system, and population growth does not account for the age or make-up of the population. Colorado is the only state in which TABOR has been enacted, and it proved to be so detrimental to state programs, including libraries, that in November 2005 Colorado voters approved a measure suspend the limits for 5 years while they address the problems. This will be a major issue to address with state legislators on the OLA Legislative Day on March 7, 2006.

Rural Libraries Sustainability Program Workshops This Winter/Spring

Rural Libraries Sustainability is a project designed by the Gates Foundation and Web Junction to give library staff the resources they need to address the unique challenges of a rural environment. The workshop will focus on issues rural libraries have identified as obstacles in sustaining public access computing services for their patrons. Library staff attending this workshop will return home with ideas, information, and action plans to improve both the technical and human connections in their communities.

Six workshop opportunities have been scheduled. All sessions will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with registration beginning at 9:00 a.m.

- January 31, 2006 • Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City
- February 7, 2006 • Woodward Public Library
- February 22 • Altus Public Library
- April 4 • Choctaw County Public Library (Hugo)
- April 11 • Newkirk Public Library
- April 19 • Wagoner City Public Library

1st Amendment Congress Report

The 1st Amendment Congress was held on November 10, 2005 at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Gene Policinski, Director of the First Amendment Center in Nashville, TN, was the opening speaker. Policinski outlined five threats to our 1st Amendment Freedoms: ignorance, fear (the “post-“ Oklahoma City Bombing and 9/11 world we live in), apathy, inconvenience, and the desire to seek simple solutions for complex problems. The second half was a panel featuring lawyers and some well-known librarians and library educators from across the state: Drs. Danny Wallace and Connie Van Fleet from OU SLIS, Theresa Dickson from Pioneer Library System (former state representative to MLA), and Marilyn Hinshaw (former MPLA president). The library speakers along with lawyers addressed how libraries need to defend the “marketplace of ideas.