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Oklahoma Report
Mountain Plains Library Association
March 31, 2011

The Oklahoma Library Association Annual Conference is in Tulsa Oklahoma from March 30-April 1. We are looking forward to a fun and informative conference. Our banquet speaker is Billy Letts, author of Where the Heart Is and The Honk and Holler Opening Soon . Our keynote speaker is Hal Niedzviecki. His topic is libraries in the era of peep culture. As described in the program “We are learning to love watching ourselves and our neighbors. We are turning away from prescribed entertainments, from movies and books and pop music, and spending more and more time amusing ourselves by watching the real life travails of other people on Facebook, Twitter, webcam, YouTube, Reality TV and more.”

Meanwhile, let’s take a peep back at the State Legislature, where the situation is not amusing for anyone, legislators included. The state revenues are insufficient and there are a number of difficult decisions to be made. There are propositions to consolidate agencies and to consolidate departments within agencies. There is concern with a duplication of efforts that could perhaps be solved by removing departments within agencies to a central location which would reduce the manpower in the agencies. Both the State Department of Education and Department of Libraries may face significant budget cuts in this and other ways. There may be immediate fiscal benefits from some of these efforts, but in the long run, library services and education will suffer. With money so very tight, these are hard times and the legislature faces hard decisions. In addition, there is a group of freshmen in the legislature whose current concern seems to be more with immigration and abortion issues and less with these educational issues.

The Oklahoma Library Association welcomes Gary Shaffer, who became Tulsa City-County Library CEO in January. He came to Oklahoma from the Sacramento (California) Public Library.