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Oklahoma MPLA Board Report

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by Wayne Hanway, Oklahoma Library Association Representative

State Aid Funding Gets Tangled Up With Children's Book Challenged by Legislators

The complaint of an Oklahoma City couple unhappy that the book *King and King* is available in the Metropolitan Library System as a regular easy reader picture book was aired on a local TV station, rather than being submitted to the library. A state legislator from Oklahoma City then introduced a nonbinding resolution that was passed 81 – 3 by the state House of Representatives, asking “Oklahoma libraries to confine homosexually themed books and other age-inappropriate material to areas exclusively for adult access and distribution.”

What might have been a barely-noticed incident became a matter of greater concern to Oklahoma librarians because several state representatives then held up consideration of the budget for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) and a high-priority request for added state aid funding for municipal libraries. Several newspaper editorials, including one in Oklahoma City's *The Oklahoman*, chastised legislators for the funding threat, saying that decisions about library materials are properly handled by local library boards. Shortly before the end of the session, the ODL budget was passed and \$400,000 (about half) of the requested new state aid funding for municipal libraries was approved. But one legislator said that further action would be considered in coming months.

Oklahoma librarians found it interesting that a nearly identical resolution was introduced in the Louisiana legislature but was defeated in committee. A point that was noted in discussions about the resolution is that Oklahoma public libraries do not have any areas that are specifically restricted to adults.

In reaction to this, ALA Council passed a resolution to “affirm the inclusion in library collections of materials that reflect the diversity of our society, including those related to sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation” and to encourage all “chapters to take active stands against all legislative or other government attempts to proscribe materials related to sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.”

“A New Spin” at the OLA Annual Conference

Highlights from the 98th annual conference of the Oklahoma Library Association, held March 30 - April 1 at the National Employee Development Center in Norman, included:

- MPLA President Beth Avery presented her excellent program “Ecology or Feng Shui: creating Positive Relationships Between Patrons and the Library” to a full house and was a wonderful diplomat for MPLA at the booth and throughout the conference.

- the keynote address by author Rilla Askew (*Fire in Beulah*) was outstanding, reminding librarians that “Oklahoma’s libraries’ only responsibility is to spin the truth — all sides of the truth, all viewpoints. To be the gatekeepers of intellectual freedom, the keepers of the resources, the archives, the books.”
- librarian action figure model and reader’s advisor extraordinaire Nancy Pearl spoke to a standing-room-only crowd about reader’s advisory service and entertained the awards banquet with her tales of the perils of being a bibliophile
- Patrick Brennan, who retired April 30th as Director of the Noble Foundation’s research library, was presented OLA’s Distinguished Service Award, recognizing his many contributions to OLA and to the Friends of Libraries in Oklahoma (FOLIO).
- Choctaw storyteller and author Tim Tingle presented two programs to help librarians prepare local discussions of his book, *Walking the Choctaw Road*, which is the 2005 Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma selection.
- congratulations went to Pat Weaver-Meyers, Director of Technical Services for the University of Oklahoma’s libraries, on her election as Vice President-President-Elect.