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Oklahoma MPLA Board Report
January 7, 2004

by Wayne Hanway, Oklahoma Library Association Representative

At their November 21, 2003 meeting, the Executive Board of the Oklahoma Library Association voted to invite MPLA to a joint conference in Oklahoma in 2010. The invitation will be formally extended at the January 24, 2004 MPLA Board meeting. First-time Oklahoma book festival exceeds expectations

The Red Dirt Book Festival lived up to the prediction that its debut would be a major literary event. Reading enthusiasts from 13 states and the United Kingdom gathered in Shawnee, Oklahoma, in mid-October for two days of reading, writing, and talking about books.

More than one thousand participants shuttled between the campuses of Oklahoma Baptist University and St. Gregory's University to enjoy 90 presentations and workshops offered by Oklahoma authors, illustrators, publishers, storytellers, and scholars.

In addition to the workshops, the festival also offered one-on-one writing critique sessions with the authors. Many festival participants used this opportunity to have their manuscripts reviewed before submission to the Red Dirt Anthology. The anthology, to be published in the Spring of 2004, will include short stories, poems, essays, and illustrations selected from more than eighty submissions at the festival.

Other festival highlights included on-stage presentations by the members of the Territory Tellers, music from the Farm Couple, authors reading from their latest works, and an open mike night at a local bistro. Best-selling novelist Tony Hillerman was the featured speaker at a banquet. Luncheon speakers introduced the novelists included in a new book discussion series, "Oklahoma, Re-Visions," and presented recent winners and finalists of the Oklahoma Book Award.

The Red Dirt Book Festival was a project of the Pioneer Library System with major funding from the Oklahoma Humanities Council. For more information, including plans for Red Dirt 2 in October, 2005, log on to www.reddirtbookfestival.org.

Coming OLA workshops include (for more information, go to www.ok.libs.org):

- Feb. 19 and 26 – Conflict in the Stacks, a workshop on conflict management, sponsored by the Administration Round Table. Feb. 19th at Cameron University, Lawton. Feb. 26th at Hardesty Regional Library, Tulsa.
- Mar. 5 – Not Just the Funnies Anymore: Exploring graphic novels. A workshop on graphic novels, cosponsored by the Public Library Division and the Oklahoma Assn. of School Library Media Specialists. At the Stillwater Public Library.

- Mar. 18 – Be Your Own Legal Beagle: Tracking Down Federal and Oklahoma Laws. A workshop sponsored by the Government Documents Round Table. At the Oklahoma State University Library, Stillwater.

Plans are nearly finished for OLA's annual legislative day on Tuesday, March 9th. Besides funding concerns, other key issues are a proposed mandatory filtering bill for public libraries and protecting the requirement for certification of school librarians. The preliminary program for OLA's 2004 conference has gone to the printer. The conference will be April 14 – 16, at the Adams Mark in Tulsa. The theme is "Telling Library Stories." ALA President-Elect Carol Brey-Casiano will be the keynote speaker. Special pre-conference events will include workshops on DDC 22 and on Marketing Library Services and Resources, plus a benefit golf tournament.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries received a \$140,000 Staying Connected grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. These funds in combination with an LSTA grant will be used to upgrade all public libraries in Oklahoma to at least a T-1 level connection to the Internet. This grant will particularly benefit small, rural public libraries in Oklahoma. ODL also received a \$137,000 grant from the National Historical Preservation and Records Commission for re-grants to fifteen organizations whose collections contain important historical records. This is the first time that Oklahoma has received re-granting funds.

Oklahoma's first statewide one book program is launched. The initiative called "Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma" is a four year program that will feature a book each year on the Oklahoma experience to be read and discussed between now and Oklahoma's centennial year in 2007. The book was selected through a statewide online voting process from a list of six books. Sixteen hundred sixteen votes were cast to select *The Honk and Holler Opening Soon*, by Billie Letts as the book for 2004. For more details go to the website: <http://www.okreadsok.org/>.

The state budget situation in Oklahoma appears to have stabilized. Since the beginning of the fiscal year, revenue estimates have been met or exceeded resulting in no further budget reductions to the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The priority for the legislative session beginning in February will be to restore state aid grants and public library construction grants to at least their previous level.

In November, the Oklahoma Library Association joined with Freedom of Information Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, and other organizations to present the 5th Annual First Amendment Congress: "Homeland Security: Redefining Freedom". The first day was attended by high school and college students from all over the state and the second day was attended by librarians, educators, lawyers, journalists and citizens.

Two nationally recognized speakers presented workshops sponsored by OLA -- Mary Minow on The Patriot Act and Laura Gasaway on Copyright Law. Both workshops were very well-attended and received highly positive evaluations.

In December, University of Oklahoma School of Library & Information Studies faculty member Connie Van Fleet was named as the recipient of the ALISE Award for Teaching Excellence in the Field of Library and Information Science Education.