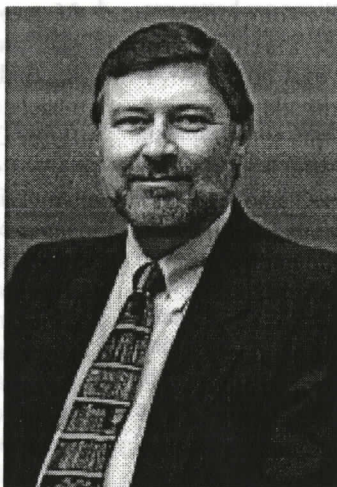


That's Good for Oklahoma!®

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES MEETS TRADITIONAL, NEW NEEDS

Some cyberpunks and Internet surfers think the Information Age will lead to the death of public libraries. But that won't be the case according to Robert L. Clark, Jr., Director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL), the state agency that assists with public library development and information sharing.

"I equate the idea that libraries are dying with the concept of the paperless society," Clark said. "We're actually generating more paper than ever now that computers have entered the workforce."



Robert L. Clark, Jr.

A REFUGE

Clark said bookstores never put libraries out business. "There will always be a need for a community repository of information in a democratic society," he said. "In fact, on-line information is simply giving libraries another tool to serve their patrons. Librarians are experts at organizing and finding information quickly. And the library may be the last refuge for citizens without a computer and modem."

But libraries are restructuring themselves to take advantage of the new information technology. And ODL is helping.

The Department has used federal funds to equip Oklahoma's public libraries with the necessary hardware and software to access and share electronic information. A library catalog listing the holdings of more than 800 libraries in the state has been available in CD-ROM format for the past three years, and made its on-line debut this spring.

"We're also investigating purchasing other on-line databases for use statewide," Clark said. "And ODL will have a site on the World Wide Web by this summer."

Meanwhile, the Department's library consultants are hosting more technology-oriented workshops and doing more technical training out in the field to help libraries utilize the Internet and other on-line databases.

The changing information scene, along with the increasing competition for government funds, has lead ODL to embark on an ambitious new strategic long range plan for serving its library and state government customers.

"We've spent the past year gathering information and conducting surveys, and we're now in the decision-making process," Clark said. "We are finding out how to meet our customers' demands in the most efficient and effective way."

FULFILLING ITS ORIGINAL MISSION

ODL, like other libraries, is walking a tightrope between traditional services and new information technologies. Libraries are expected to offer access to electronic information, but citizens still want books, magazines, reference services and library programs, such as storytimes for children. More than anything, it's causing a budget crunch for libraries.

"The cost of library materials is rising, but libraries are also expected to invest money in computer hardware, long distance phone charges, and expensive on-line services," said Clark.

Training staff and patrons in information access also adds to the burden, and libraries are having to make some tough choices.

Tough choices are not new to ODL. The agency has grown from a small library established by the Territorial Legislature in 1891. Today, the Department's Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Law Library in the State Capitol Building continues the original mission of the first territorial library: To provide legislative and legal reference to Oklahoma's elected officials and government employees.

Other divisions and collections of the department include:

- ✓ The State Archives, which houses important historical documents for posterity, including papers of governors, the Supreme Court and Secretary of State records;
- ✓ The Records Management Division, responsible for assisting state agencies with storing, maintaining and disposing of state government records according to Oklahoma law;
- ✓ The US Government Information Division, a regional deposi-

ODL's AWARD WINNING LITERACY CAMPAIGN

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries successful state-wide literacy awareness campaign "Learn to Read and the World Opens Wide," is a winner in the 1996 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations competition.

A variety of promotional pieces and strategies were developed to recruit students and tutors in 1995. The goal was surpassed by 44 percent.

Utilizing donated material, time and talent from a variety of local businesses and organizations, the ODL was able to create the winning campaign with limited funds. Ann Hamilton, ODL Public Information Office staff member and songwriter gave the campaign its theme, 'When you learn to read, the world opens wide,' which is the chorus of her song *Read*. Hamilton donated the license to the song for use in the state to the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition.

Another ODL staffer, Leslie Gelders, ODL Literacy Coordinator has a special connection to the award. Her mother, Marilyn Vesely, was responsible for ODL winning several John Cotton Dana Awards during the '70s and '80s.

The JCD Award is sponsored by the ALA Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) and the H.W. Wilson Company.