

# American Indian Libraries Newsletter



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## NCLIS Holds Hearings

by

Janice Beaudin  
Chair, OLOS Indian  
Subcommittee

Library needs of American Indians were the focus of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) meetings in Santa Fe, NM, January 25-27, 1989. Chairman Jerald Newman and Executive Director Susan Martin led site visits to pueblo libraries at Laguna, Cochiti, Santa Clara, and San Ildefonso. Two of the four libraries were closed, but were reopened for the visit.

The second day consisted of a panel of experts and open hearings from American Indians located throughout the country. Panelists included Irwin J. Nelson, Navajo Nation Library System; Veronica Peynetsa, Zuni Public Library; Elaine Filbert, Santa Clara Community Library; Elizabeth Waconda, Laguna Public Library; Barbara Grimes, Futures for Children; and Susie Sonfleith, New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. The panelists reported on a variety of topics, such as their library services, sources of funding, programming efforts, and the need for continued funding to support these services.

During the hearings written and oral testimony was received from George Abrams, Seneca Nation; Janice Beaudin, Winnebago,

University of Wisconsin-Madison; Gary Tom, Paiute Tribe of Utah; Sandra Long, Cherokee Nation; Jim West, Cheyenne/Arapaho representing Pequot; Lois Fellows, Laguna Elementary School Library; Mimi Wooten, Sioux, Arizona State University; Lester Sandoval, Jicarilla Apache; and Larry Aikens, Navajo Community College. Many voiced the need for technical assistance for library development on Indian reservations. LSCA Title IV grants are too small, and the grants' brief 12-18 month duration provides no support for sustaining an ongoing program. Other problems reported were the inconsistent support from state and local library agencies, as well as Indian governing bodies.

An ad hoc committee of commissioners was appointed by Newman to meet with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Department of Education during the NCLIS meeting in Washington, D.C., April 13-14, 1989. The committee consists of Wanda Forbes, Charles Reid, Margaret Phelan, Dorothy Swaim, and Jerald Newman (ex-officio). Mary Alice Riszter was appointed as the NCLIS staff liaison. The commissioners will recommend that a White House Pre-Conference on Library & Information Services for American Indians be held prior to the national White House Conference on Library and Information Services II.

## WHAT ARE AMERICAN INDIAN LIBRARIES?

by

Virginia H. Mathews (Osage)  
Lotsee Patterson (Comanche)

The addition of Title IV to the Library Services and Construction Act of 1984 provided, for the first time, funds for "Library Services for Indian Tribes and Hawaiian Natives Program." Although a number of tribes had been trying for some time to operate tribal libraries for reservation communities, there had never been a stable source of funding, and most tribes lacked the professional expertise to manage the information resources and services that are needed in Indian Country. Although the sum of money available through the Basic Grants was small--about \$3,000 in each fiscal year--it was a start. The Special Project Grants, made with funds remaining after Basic Grants are awarded, are applied for on a competitive basis by any tribe that has received a Basic Grant. In the second year of the operation of the program, fiscal 1986, \$606,177 was used to make 185 Basic Grant awards to applicants, and \$1,052,073 supported 17 Special Projects Grants. Authorized activities include library needs assessment; training of library personnel and salaries for same; purchase of library materials; dissemination of information about library services; transportation to services and bookmobiles to take services to people; special programs; construction; and contracts to provide services.

Special Project Grants must be part of a long-range plan, must be administered by a professional librarian, and must have a cost share factor of 20

percent. Some examples in the 1986 fiscal year were--support of two bookmobiles and establishment of ten library deposit collections to serve the 25,000 square mile Navajo Nation;--The Morongo Band of Mission Indians purchased a trailer to serve as a library facility, selected materials, and hired a librarian in Banning, California;--the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Pablo, Montana, computerized the card catalog and established a phone link between two communities;--Fort Berthold Community College will provide public library services to the Three Affiliated Tribes in New Town, North Dakota;--The Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma focus is on needs assessment and training tribal members for library services and purchase of materials in Anadarko, Oklahoma;--The Nisqually Tribe of Olympia Washington, will construct a 2,000-square-foot addition to the tribal administration building that will serve tribal members, especially in connection with Head Start and adult education programs;--The Ute Tribe in Fort Duchesne, Utah, hired a librarian, purchased materials, and is operating a temporary facility based on identified needs;--The Miccosukee Tribe of Miami, Florida, has hired staff and operates a library awareness program for predominately Miccosukee-speaking preschoolers and elderly community members.

The Basic Grant awarded to the Hawaii Natives was made to Alu Like, Inc., the only organization recognized as eligible by the Governor of Hawaii. Outreach programs, training and strengthening of Hawaiian and Pacific collections all were made possible by the grant fund. Basic grant funds for the tribes were used for the most part for the

purchase of library materials.

With the implementation of the LSCA Title IV legislation came the realization that there is no one entity responsible for providing guidance and technical assistance to American Indian people. A few tribes, but by no means all, get outstanding support from state libraries. In response to need, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Division of Library Programs issued an RFP to provide "Leadership Training, Guidance, and Direction for the Improvement of Public Library and Information Services to Native American Tribes." The University of Oklahoma, with Dr. Lotsee Patterson as Program Director, was awarded the contract to carry out these tasks.

Under the name of "TRAILS" (Training and Assistance for Indian Libraries Services,) the program began operation in September 1985. The population served was 512 tribal groups located in 30 states from the tip of Florida to the Arctic Circle, and from New York to California. A toll-free number and bimonthly mail updates were used as communication devices. Assessing the tribes' priorities, TRAILS found that the primary concern was for finding other sources of funding to go along with the federal grants; technical assistance in organizing a library program, planning, and selection and acquisition of materials were close runners-up. Workshops conducted by TRAILS focused on these topics. A Tribal Library Procedures Manual was developed and mailed to all tribes. It included two frequently requested items--a needs assessment instrument and sample tribal policies governing library services.

TRAILS received many requests

for assistance with tribal archives and records management, but these were beyond the scope of the work statement and the time limitations of the small staff. When the TRAILS program ended on January 8, 1987, it had conducted 12 workshops in 7 states--in coordination with the respective state libraries and involving 76 tribal groups and Alaska Native villages; an average of 130 telephone requests for assistance per month had been handled; site visits to 14 tribes or Alaska Native villages with consultant help had been made; and a growing complex of correspondence had been answered.

It is very evident that the TRAILS program, in only 16 months of operation, had begun to meet a great need for on-going assistance to the American Indian and Native peoples. Some state libraries are committing resources and staff to attempt to address this need, but levels of service vary greatly. When development funds are restored to libraries, American Indians will hope to have again a sustained program for training and technical assistance to American Indian Library programs.

The overall result of Title IV of LSCA and the TRAILS support program is that American Indian people now see library service as the vital factor it can be in their educational, social, and economic well-being. They have seen for themselves the benefits of library support of early childhood, literacy, employment, adult education, aid to the elderly, and dozens of other programs. Most likely they will not allow themselves to be deprived of it ever again.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Office for Library Outreach Services is co-sponsoring with PLA/EIC Kellogg Project, a pre-conference, "Empowering Adults in Transition: the Role of Education and Career Information Centers in Public Libraries," June 22-23 at the Dallas Fairmont. Participants will learn how to establish and maintain programs that help fulfill the library's role as a center for community activities and independent learning. For complete information and registration contact Public Library Association, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611, (800) 545-2433.

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Editors: Kathy Kaya and Debby Schaeffer. Manuscripts and letters pertaining to editorial content should be sent to Kathy Kaya, The Libraries, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-0022. Subscription rates: \$5.00 (individuals); \$7.00 (libraries, institutions & agencies); \$10.00 (foreign/overseas); \$2.00 each (back issues). Send subscription requests to Sibyl Moses, Director, OLOS, American Library Association, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

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**AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
50 EAST HURON STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60611**