

**USA COUNTRY REPORT  
FOR THE  
IFLA STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

**By Mary Sherman  
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**CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT**

The long awaited decision from the United States Supreme Court was rendered on June 23. The Court upheld the Children's Internet Protection Act(CIPA) that requires all public libraries to install anti-pornography Internet filters on all of their computers if they receive federal funds. The American Library Association had argued that CIPA violated the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The decision was 6-3 and stated that CIPA does not violate the First Amendment which guarantees free speech.

If Adults are using the computers, they may request that the filters be disabled. Federal regulations will determine how this may be accomplished and libraries are now waiting for the regulations. Many libraries were filtering children's computers, but the law includes even staff computers.

**US PATRIOT ACT**

Section 215 of the US Patriot Act which was passed after the Terrorists Acts on September 11, 2001 threatens bookstore and library privacy. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents (FBI) do not need to prove they have "probable cause" before searching bookstore or library records. They can get access to the records of anyone whom they believe to have information that may be relevant to a terrorism investigation, including people who are not suspected of committing a crime or having any knowledge of a crime. A bookseller or librarian is forbidden from alerting anyone to the fact that a search has occurred. As a result, a number of booksellers, publishers, and numerous library associations including ALA have found a friend in Congressman Bernie Sanders. He has introduced a bill in Congress which will strengthen protections for the privacy of bookstore and library records. No action on the bill has been taken to date. Congressman Sanders spoke at the joint ALA/CLA Conference in Toronto.

**ECONOMIC DOWNTURN OR BAD TIMES FOR US LIBRARIES**

The past ten years have been good for the library community with many new buildings constructed and many new programs added. However, the US economy has not been the same since 9/11/01 and has not been helped with the war in Iraq. Libraries all over the USA are feeling the pinch of less funding. Many libraries have cut hours, staff, and materials budgets. Staff travel has also been cut. At the same time library use has risen since people have less money to spend.

## **JOINT ALA/CLA CONFERENCE IN TORONTO**

Both Associations are feeling a negative financial impact since the attendance was much lower than originally expected due to SARS and the economy. The conference was a huge success for those in attendance. The speakers and programs were outstanding. I particularly enjoyed seeing Barbara Clubb and meeting her staff as well as other Canadian Librarians.

## **PLA NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN SEATTLE IN 2004**

I would like to invite the committee to the conference which will be held Feb. 24-28, 2004 in Seattle, Washington. The new Seattle Library is supposed to be open by that date. Another draw is that Microsoft is located in the Seattle area. There were 400 proposals submitted for 100 programs. PLA is one of the best conferences I have ever attended. There are no committee meetings. It is strictly programs and exhibits. Registration opens in September and more information can be found at [www.pla.org](http://www.pla.org).

## **PIONEER LIBRARY SYSTEM**

My library system is concluding its best summer reading program ever for children and the first summer reading program for teens. In addition we are the major sponsors and founders of the Red Dirt Book Festival to be held on October 17 & 18th. More than 100 authors with Oklahoma roots will be present. The Festival will have author talks, panel discussions, drama, etc. We are excited that what started as a small idea has grown to be a large event. Funding is coming from grants and sponsorships.

For the first time in my 16 years as Director I have a wonderful graphics designer on my staff. I also have a new Public Information Officer who is terrific. They have prepared a CD that shows some of the graphics they prepared for our events. I am bringing one to each member of the committee who is present in Berlin

Also on the CD is information about our family literacy program at the particular request of Kay Raseroka, IFLA President Elect. Kay and I had lunch in Toronto and discussed her literacy theme. As a result she wanted information on our family literacy program which has been small in the past and will be much bigger with some recent grants.