

Orange County Library Association

August 1977

One of the first assignments given to the newly named Archives Committee by the 1977 Orange County Library Association President, Bethany Ochal, was to develop a brief factual history of the Organization which would include its founding officers and any pertinent facts that might be of interest to current members also serve as a historical basis for future officers, board members and members.

Thanks to the able assistance of Ray Long, UCI Medical Library; Roger Berry, Special Collections; UCI Library; Kay Crail, Research Assistant and my son, Dan Michael, we were able to locate the appropriate official records of the organization and are pleased to present the following for the edification of future generations.

ORGANIZATION FOUNDING: The first meeting of the organization was held on November 2, 1920, election Day at the Fullerton Public Library. Twenty prospective members were in attendance and Miss Minnie Maxwell was elected President, Bertha Proctor, Secretary-Treasurer. Dues were set at fifty cents per year. The minutes show that the group was officially called "The Orange County Library Club" and that the personnel of the Whittier Public Library were invited to become members. It is interesting to note that for the first 15 months, the Club met only on legal holidays when the public libraries are normally closed. Meeting attendance and presumably, membership, ranged in the low twenties for the first several years and the balance in the treasury never exceeded thirty dollars for the first four years. The practice of sending flowers to deceased relatives of members was discontinued because of the drain on the treasury.

In 1925, a decision on whether the next meeting would be held in Fullerton or Huntington Beach was settled by a "flip of a coin." Apparently, it was a good decision because, at that meeting, 50 members and friends were in attendance.

At a point in the next 10 years (we will be intentionally vague to avoid any embarrassment to anyone) a serious dispute took place between the newly elected officers and the retiring secretary-treasurer over a problem relating to some checks that were written and the treasurer's reports and records. It was the subject of several special-called meetings and continued over a lengthy period of time. It was finally resolved when an auditing committee and the president called on the retired treasurer to collect the books and records, and received a cashier's check for the balance of the treasury fund in the amount of \$17.60. Unfortunately, this amount proved to be an overpayment of \$.21 and it was necessary to provide the retired treasurer with a receipt and the \$.21 and close the matter. The dues were raised from \$.50 to \$1.00 in 1930 and in the '30s, regular meetings were held on schedule with such topics as library certification, book censorship and peace being the primary areas of discussion.

The 20th anniversary of the OCLA was held in Placentia in October, 1940 and the guest speaker talked on "Propaganda in the Library," World War II had its influence on the organization in the early 1940's. Six weeks after Pearl Harbor, the guest speaker discussed "Humor for Children who have Daddies in Hawaii." She also gave suggestions on activities in which the family could engage in that time of crises such as group games and group reading. In 1942, all meetings were curtailed because of gas rationing, tire shortage, dim out driving and other restrictions.

In 1955, the name was changed to the Orange County Library Association.

After the war and into the 1950's, the membership increased because of the expansion of the population in Orange County, the establishment of new academic libraries as well as many new special libraries. The first edition of the Union List of Periodicals in Orange County was published in 1955 and subsequent editions were published in 1966 and 1970. The Directory of Libraries in Orange County, California was published in 1972. The Union List of Reference Books was published in October, 1963.

Several years later, the publication, the Union List of Reference Books created a situation that, though it is humorous to read in 1977, caused a number of headaches for the Treasurer and the President at the time. Because the Association submitted an Income Tax Return for the profit made on the sale of the Reference Books listing, the Internal Revenue Service discovered us and decided that we were indeed not a tax-exempt organization. In the following two year period, an approximate one inch thickness of correspondence was generated in Washington and Los Angeles with appropriate replies and explanations from Orange County. Finally, in September 1966, the IRS concluded that "our letter of April 1964 may be disregarded."

In 1965, the By-Laws were changed to expand the number of officers from three to five and to allow for a Board of Directors to assist in the operational aspect of the Association. The By-Laws were modified slightly again in 1969 with no major changes noted.

Since 1970, Spring and Fall General Dinner Meetings have been held with a wide variety of interesting guest speakers and an additional eight to ten Board meetings are held during the year. Membership has grown to over 200 members, representing libraries from all over the county and a gradual increase is reflected each year.

1980 will be the 60th Anniversary of the Orange County Library Association and the year will also see the population of the County approaching, if not exceeding, the two million mark. This figure, as compared to the 61,000 population figure in 1920, reflects a sizeable increase in the public served, not only in the public library sector, but also in the many new academic libraries and special libraries that have been established in the four decades. The objective of the group, as defined in the second paragraph of the minutes of the first meeting... "to give the public better service, of working out means of advertising, and bringing good books before the people in various ways" remains as meaningful as it was in 1920.

Victor J. Michael
Archives Committee