NORTHWESTERN’S OWN LIBRARY LEGENDS

On April 2, 2007, three former staff members of the Northwestern Libraries, Frances DuVall, Edith Gorman, and Ray Lau, were honored among the *Oklahoma 100 Library Legends* at the Centennial Banquet which was held in conjunction with the Oklahoma Library Association’s Annual Conference at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City.

DuVall, Gorman, and Lau were selected for this high honor through a process which started several years ago as the Oklahoma Library Association Centennial Ad Hoc Committee began working to celebrate both the Oklahoma and OLA centennials. One of the Committee’s goals was to recognize a group of approximately 100 people and/or groups who have made the most significant contributions to the development of libraries from territorial days to the present time.

Names of potential Legends were submitted by persons contacted by the Committee because of their knowledge of or access to information about various areas of librarianship in Oklahoma throughout the years. Other names were taken from a history of Oklahoma libraries published in 1937 by the Oklahoma Library Commission (now the Oklahoma Department of Libraries), Sarah Haney's 1996 dissertation *The Origin and Development of the Oklahoma Library Association: 1907 to 1994*, and OLA archival materials. Additionally, the OLA membership at large was asked to provide input during a public comment period from January 10-27, 2006. Many additions, corrections, updates, and some self submissions were made to the list at that time.
Frances DuVall

Frances DuVall, a native of Arkansas, was first employed by Northwestern State College as Reference Librarian in 1947; later her title was changed to Library Director and Associate Professor of Library Science. During the decade of the 1950’s, DuVall, with the assistance of fellow librarian, Edith Gorman, created and developed a statewide program centering on DuVall’s love of children’s literature. This program, which is recognized as the third oldest children’s choice award in the nation, is the Sequoyah Children’s Book Award. The Oklahoma Library Association later assumed sponsorship and the program continues today. Based upon DuVall’s original concept, the award is presented annually to the author of the book chosen as the favorite in voting by children in grades three to six throughout the state. The first winner of the award in 1959 was Fred Gibson, author of *Old Yeller*. DuVall served as the first Chair of the Sequoyah Committee as well as Executive Secretary of the committee. In 1966, OLA honored DuVall for her leadership in this awards program.
DuVall was one of the co-founders of the Library Science program at Northwestern. Throughout the years, the program expanded to include both a Bachelors degree program and certification programs for both public librarians and school media specialists. DuVall and fellow librarian, Edith Gorman, were instrumental in the planning and design of the J.W. Martin Library at Northwestern, the first separate library structure for the institution. DuVall died in March of 1977.

Edith Gorman

Edith Gorman, a native of Missouri, followed close friend, Frances DuVall, to the campus of Northwestern State College. Gorman and DuVall became acquainted with one another while pursuing their professional library degrees at George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. Gorman was first employed in September of 1948 in the dual role of Reference and Documents Librarian. The library had been a member of the Federal Depository Library System since statehood in 1907, but Gorman was instrumental in the initial cataloging and organizing of the federal documents. Gorman provided assistance to DuVall during the early years of the Sequoyah Children’s Book Award. She was one of the co-founders as well as Associate Professor of the Library Science program at
Northwestern. DuVall and Gorman also developed and sponsored the Library Science Club which was a very active campus organization for many years. Gorman was actively involved with the planning and design of the Alva campus library during the years of 1962-1964. For this task, she was recognized by the institution again in 1983 when the Library was officially named the J.W. Martin Library to honor a former president. On the day of the event, Martin himself credited both Gorman and DuVall “with helping to make the new structure a reality.” Even though Gorman was employed at the college library, she appreciated and valued the mission of the Alva Public Library where she gave of her time as Chairman of the Alva Public Library Board for many years. Gorman died in November of 1998.

Ray Lau

Ray Lau served the Oklahoma Library Association in various capacities and the Northwestern Oklahoma State University community as Director of Libraries during a career spanning 29 years. As a member of OLA, Lau served as Chair of the Sequoyah Children’s Book Award Committee from 1974-1978 and as the association’s Treasurer from 1981-1983. He was elected to the Council of the American Library Association in 1984 and received the Distinguished Service Award as Councilor for the American Library Association in 1988. During his career, Lau also served two terms on both the Advisory Board to the University of Oklahoma’s School of Library and Information Studies and the Governor’s Conference on Libraries. Additionally, he was a member of the Oklahoma Council of Academic Library Directors since the Council’s
inception in 1988. Ray Lau was honored with the Oklahoma Library Association’s Special Meritorious Service Award in the spring of 2003. In addition to his Director’s duties, Lau was Chair and Assistant Professor of the Department of Library Science at Northwestern until the department’s closing in 2001. He taught many of the courses in the library science curriculum in addition to advising all library science majors, supervising student teachers/librarians, and sponsoring the Library Science Club. During his time at Northwestern, he supervised two automation projects and the expansion of online technology at the library as well as creating the library on the Enid campus of NWOSU. When he retired in June 2003, the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges honored Lau with the title of Professor Emeritus.