

**DOROTHEA
BISHOP
DALE
1872-1962**



**ESTABLISHED
OVER
100
LIBRARIES**

Are they librarians or information specialists? Perhaps they should take their bearings from the path of dedication and service chartered by librarians like Dorothea Dale, the first secretary of the Library Commission. She helped establish more than one hundred libraries in Oklahoma towns.

Dorothea Bishop was born in Iowa and educated at Wisconsin's St. Clara's College, Valparaiso University, and Iowa's Highland Park College. Dorothea and Dr. John Dale left Minnesota and settled in Hobart in 1906 to help her recover from a lung ailment. Dorothea worked as a registered pharmacist for seven years and a teacher while John was an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist.

In 1913 Dale was appointed librarian at the Hobart Carnegie Library. She volunteered her services for free, if she was allowed to use the money appropriated for the librarian's salary to carry out her plans for the library's expansion. The board accepted her proposition and gave her a free hand. While Dorothea was serving as school superintendent in 1918, John died in September. Soon after, Dorothea moved to Oklahoma City.

After eleven years of intense political maneuvering, the Oklahoma Library Commission became reality in 1919, with Dale selected as the first Secretary. She had a desk, stenographer, some empty book shelves and a room on the third floor of the library wing of the State Capitol. With a \$5,000 book fund, she advertised they had 'Books for Everybody in Oklahoma'. It represented her extreme belief that if demand is created, supply will somehow rise to meet it.

Fortunately, World War I had just ended and 8,000 books arrived from the war's camp libraries distributed by the American Library Association. Dale ordered books for the Commission's traveling libraries while the Library Commission's empty shelves gradually filled themselves. Dale's hard work and faith had been rewarded.

In the 1910s, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie provided funds to build public libraries on the condition that communities pledge ten percent annually to maintain the library. Oklahoma built 24 Carnegie libraries from Ponca City to Muskogee but when some towns failed to fund their libraries, Dale conferred with the town mayors delinquent in their pledges. Two other libraries were constructed before the Carnegie funding was stopped. She also saved the mail-out book service during the Great Depression and provided camp libraries for World War II prisoners-of-war housed in Oklahoma.

Dale served under eight governors, provided library service by mail to thousands for over thirty years, was named to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1937, brought Braille books to the state, and documented the development of libraries in the state in "Oklahoma Libraries, A Handbook" (1937). Dale retired from the Oklahoma Library Commission in 1950. The Oklahoma Federation of Women's Clubs honored her by establishing an "Appreciation Shelf" at the Commission filled with books donated in her name. She also received OLA's Distinguished Service Award.

Dale died in October 1962 at age 90 in Oklahoma City. She is her own memorial through the lives she touched and the far-reaching effects of her accomplishments. Socialist leader Fred Ameringer said it best, "historians will certainly record that Mrs. Dale did more than any other one person to bring that everlasting beauty and blessing of books to Oklahoma."