

The following is an account of the history of OELMA that was written by Tim DeFrance around the time of our 25<sup>th</sup> OELMA Anniversary. We thank Tim for his research and for allowing us to reproduce his work on our web site so that many can know [The True Tale of O.E.L.M.A.](#)

# The True Tale of O.E.L.M.A.

A Brief Account in Word and Picture of the  
History of the Ohio Educational Library Media Association  
By Timothy DeFrance, East Region Director, 2000-2001

## Introduction

When I began work on this history of the Ohio Educational Library Media Association, I paid a visit to Kent State's special collections department, the storage center for OELMA's archives. I spent a long afternoon looking through five large boxes of business meeting minutes and back issues of newsletters and journals. I found the experience somewhat frustrating. The data was there, but it wasn't easy to distill. Furthermore, when I stumbled on a promising item, the rigorous special collections regulations forbade me to sign it out or photograph it. Their poor copier was marginally adequate for text items and useless for photo reproduction. Images were impossible to retrieve.

Returning home deeply dissatisfied, I gave longtime OELMA historian Bob Blankenship a call. Bob was AVCO President in 1964-65 and an Edgar Dale Award winner in 1985. He'd been around a long time and I reasoned that he might have some tips on how to proceed effectively. Bob said that he had quite a bit of archival data there at his home and invited me to drop in. When I arrived he had several boxes filled to the brim in his living room. They bulged with a conference photos, slides, and back issues of Spectrum. As he showed me through his home-stored archives, I grew excited that this history could be visual and not text only. I left his house that day with a full car trunk and spent the summer of 2000 looking at Bob's treasures. Now and again, I found myself driving down Bob's long sloping driveway to get this image or that. You will find Bob's insights sprinkled throughout this history.

Former Spectrum editor Kari Inglis supplied photos, mailings and sound advice on strategy. I thank Kari, too, for her good memory of past historical pieces in Spectrum and for her sharing so promptly by mail from her Spectrum archive.

No history is perfect and this one confesses its sins at the start. When I discovered that the historical period of OELMA began in the forties and ended in the third millennium, I noticed that it seemed to have three distinct periods. The first, the "Pre-OELMA" period, dealt with how OELMA's two parent organizations, EMCO and OASL, were founded in the forties and were formed and developed in the fifties and sixties. The second, the "Birth of OELMA" period, covered when EMCO and OASL consolidated to become OELMA in the 70's. The third, the

“Modern Presidents” period, enumerated the various struggles OELMA faced through the legislative trials and economic constrictions of the eighties and nineties. This brief history focuses most specifically on the middle “Birth of OELMA” period. Not to devalue the early formation period or the challenges of the modern period, but the years surrounding OELMA’s birth hint at a providential grace and serendipitous foresight by its consolidating team and first leaders that has served OELMA well in the difficult years that have followed. It seemed to me that those formative years were OELMA’s prophetic times.

### **Papa EMCO and Mama OASL**

OELMA came from two distinct parent organizations had its own rich professional heritage. Each had a unique history and development, yet they had several elements in common. Their membership came from very similar professional fields, and their educational goals were nearly identical. Their common dream of enhancing teaching and learning brought them together and led them to unite.

### **EMCO's Origins**

Begun in 1949 EMCO or the Educational Media Council of Ohio had three names before its membership settled on EMCO. Its birth name in 1949 was DAVI or Directors of AudioVisual Instruction. Later that moniker was changed to AVDO or the Audio-Visual Directors of Ohio, a name that was short lived because it copied the acronym of a larger non-related organization’s name. The group quickly changed their name to AVCO or the AudioVisual Coordinators of Ohio but later finally settled on EMCO. EMCO’s members came from schools, colleges, and businesses. Within EMCO could be found librarians, high school service persons, and college service persons, college teachers of library and AV courses, and commercial vendors. EMCO’s membership was mostly male with just a few women members. EMCO was comfortable with its elite membership of about 150 professionals from across Ohio. Audio-visual pioneers such as Edgar Dale led early meetings. The group was just the right size for everyone to know everyone else and meetings were satisfying both professionally and socially.

### **OASL's Beginnings**

Ohio Association of School Librarians or OASL began in 1946 with a group of Toledo librarians led by Virginia Hollinger of Toledo. It was the custom for the librarians to attend OEA meetings with their teachers. The frustration of not using their time well in these meetings apparently prompted Virginia Hollinger and other Toledo librarians to form their own group. They decided that they could better spend their time meeting with other librarians rather than teachers at OEA meetings. In 1946 Virginia sent out letters to 73 librarians proposing to begin a state organization for school librarians. In October of 1947, 57 librarians met and formed the Ohio Association of School librarians. One year later there were 179 at the second OASL convention in Dayton. By 1975 OASL had over 1500 members. OASL’s membership was predominately female with just a few male members. OASL was a fast growing organization about ten times larger in membership than EMCO’s because their pool of prospective members was far larger than EMCO’s.

### **Cause for Consolidation**

With such similar goals and philosophies, traditional print material and technology-driven media becoming more and more interconnected in instructional design, the need to join ranks made sense to the leadership of both organizations. Forward thinking librarians saw the value of non print media in enhancing the learning in their buildings. Audiovisual leaders saw the importance of integrating non print media with the whole teaching and learning process. The professional goals for both organizations had become nearly identical. Leaders of both organizations discussed the possibility of merging their organizations into a single powerful statewide library media organization. OASL President Hannah McCauley, OASL VP Margaret Lindley, OASL Secretary Diane Ball, OASL Treasurer Harriet Foley made up the OASL consolidation committee. OASL leaders like Diane Ball the next to last OASL president laid the foundation within OASL.

EMCO leaders worked to build a unified foundation for the consolidation within their organization. Dr. John Mitchell, EMCO President led the effort assisted by EMCO Treasurer Judith K. Meyers, EMCO Secretary Lou Aulds, EMCO VP Ross Fleming, and parliamentarian Fred Williams. The new consolidated organization would be called the Ohio Educational Library Media Association. The name was greatly discussed with particular focus on whether to put a slash or a hyphen between "library" and "media." (In the end it was decided to put nothing between those two words.)

The first combined EMCO and OASL Conference called Media Mix '75 and held in Columbus represented the fruit of the efforts of these founders who honed the best from within their organizations. Some in EMCO felt uneasy. OASL was a huge organization in 1975 with over 1500 members. EMCO had around 150 members. Some EMCO members feared they would be lost inside huge OASL. The cartoon spoof of Jaws, a popular movie at the time, resonated with EMCO members who imagined their identity completely disappearing after the consolidation ran its course.

### **Baby OELMA**

The nervousness of some in EMCO notwithstanding, the consolidation efforts rumbled on to their inevitable conclusion. OELMA's birth moment was recorded in the minutes of the last meeting of the OASL. At precisely 10AM on Saturday, Oct. 16, 1976 at the Spirit of '76 Joint Convention General Session in Cleveland, Ohio. Diane Ball, presiding as President of OASL received a motion and a second that OASL consolidate into a new organization to be called OELMA. The yeas carried the motion, and since EMCO had previously voted the same way earlier that morning, OELMA was born.

### **Izzy and Maxie**

The new organization began with the shared leadership of Isabelle Pratt who would have been the new OASL President and Maxie Lambright who would have been the incoming president of EMCO. They would serve as Co-Presidents of

OELMA. Isabelle served as an elementary librarian at Findlay City Schools, and Maxie taught library media courses at Defiance College. Agreeing to combine both their boards into one large board, Isabelle and Maxie entered the leadership spotlight in a spirit of mutual respect and harmony. They drove to board meetings in the same car. Driving south to Columbus, they brainstormed strategies to maximize the strengths of their respective board members for the good of the new organization. Gracious towards each other, they took turns presiding throughout their term. Setting an example of interdependence for their officers, they collaborated with humor and harmony, driving to meetings together and planning every endeavor carefully. By the end of their shared presidential term they had melded two very separate organizations into one.

### **Leading with Vision**

These past OELMA Presidents offer their memories and highlights from their terms of service. President's accomplishments list prior to 1991 was excerpted from an article by Terri Fredericka in Ohio Media Spectrum Winter 1992 Fifteen-Year Anniversary issue. (Volume 44 no.4)

#### **ISABELLE PRATT 76-77 CO-PRESIDENT**

In that first year of OELMA the challenge that Maxie Lambright and I shared as co-presidents was the welding of two active organizations into a viable, cohesive one.

#### **MAXIE LAMBRIGHT 76-77 CO-PRESIDENT**

We were concerned with keeping the organization going that first year.

#### **JOHN KERSTETTER PRESIDENT 77-78**

My most rewarding accomplishment was working with Charlotte Leonard, president-elect of OLA to plan and carry out the first OELMA-OLA concurrent conference.

#### **DOROTHY ANN ELLIS PRESIDENT 78-79**

Working with great supporting administration officers  
Putting on a big drive for stronger library support by school superintendents

#### **HUGH DURBIN PRESIDENT 79-80**

Great conferences  
Strengthening ties to national organizations: ALA and AECT  
Hugh passed away in 1999.

#### **BETTY WOLFORD PRESIDENT 80-81**

Fighting the new adopted state minimum standards  
Witnessing these minimums go through despite efforts by some very capable people

#### **RALPH CARDER PRESIDENT 81-82**

Following excellent predecessors and getting the student media contest going  
Working with a super-organized VP in Ann Tepe

ANN TEPE PRESIDENT 82-83

OELMA Cincinnati Conference

"Ralph Carder squashing a big bug right next to his plate at the banquet to the delight of my children who were watching."

ANNE HYLAND PRESIDENT 1984

Growth in the Student Media Contest

DIG INTO LEARNING distributed to school districts statewide

Intellectual freedom award was created

Ellen Stepanian and Robert Blankenship were awarded our highest honors

DONNA BOYLAN PRESIDENT 1985

Synergy of the groups working together to accomplish goals

"Funny memory was when Jim Butts and I decided the goals we were developing on the plane to AECT Leadership were 'lofty.'"

JIM BUTTS PRESIDENT 1986

Laid the ground work for the Executive Secretary's position (later Executive Director)

Student Media Contest revised

SHARYN VAN EPS Jan-Jun 87 PRESIDENT

Putting the '86 conference to bed

Adding the executive secretary's position to the organization

JUDITH MILLS PRESIDENT JULY 87 - DEC 88

Taking the reins of the OELMA presidency when Sharon resigned mid year in 1987

Learning with Ann Hanning as OELMA's brand new executive secretary

Attending the 1987 conference as both Chairperson and President

ANN HANNING OELMA Executive Director 1987-Present

Ohio Department of Education Liaison to EMCO and OASL

Charter member of OELMA, Member of ALA, AASL, ICLAE, AECT, and OSAE

Leader and faithful guide, serving OELMA since 1987

MARJORIE PAPPAS 1989 PRESIDENT

First joint conference with OLA, ALAO, and OELMA

Sharing the Conference Hotel with George Bush and his staff

John Myles' committee's completion of the strategic plan

Initial grant proposal for INFOhio

Annual directory efforts begun

JOYCE B. WALLACH 1990 PRESIDENT

Bringing the finances from a volunteer into the professional office

Making a deal with OLA to share accounting services

THERESA M. FREDERICKA 1991 PRESIDENT

Working with the Cleveland Conference Planning committee  
Car pooling with Tony Marshalek  
Coordinating the Talent Show for Leadership  
INFOhio project begun to be built

TONY MARSHALEK 1992 PRESIDENT  
Last issue of Spectrum by Ed Newren, new publisher found  
INFOhio begins to happen  
OELMA restructuring

JANICE THOMAS 1993 PRESIDENT  
Joint convention held with ALA  
Finally OELMA set up its own offices in Columbus without having to be dependent on OEA.

LYNDA SADOWSKI 1994 PRESIDENT  
Implementing the Procedural Manual still used today by every member of the Board of Directors.

KIM MILLER-SMITH 1995 PRESIDENT  
Communication/work with the State of Ohio Dept of Education  
Communication/work with the State of Ohio Board of Education on Library Media certification and standards for library media  
We continued our efforts with the Dept of Ed to increase funding for INFOhio.

SHEILA GROSS BENEDUM 1996 PRESIDENT  
Funding from the state legislature to open the INFOhio Union Catalog to non-MultiLis users for downloading MARC records  
Funding for the first two years of Encyclopaedia Britannica access for all schools in the state  
Linked up with groups/associations in our OELMA Conference to increase choices and profit  
Signed the contract with Fas-Track in '96

BONNIE MATHIES 1997 PRESIDENT  
Worked with Fas-Track  
Progress with Advocacy  
INFOhio finds its stride  
New leadership in OELMA developed

GARY JOSEPH 1998 PRESIDENT  
OELMA Web Page begun  
OELMA Electronic List begun  
Most profitable conference in the history of OELMA  
Corporate sponsorship nets OELMA over the four-year period, \$100,000.  
Quality Library Media Programs: Information Power for Ohio Schools published and distributed throughout Ohio.

#### BARBARA TOPE 1999 PRESIDENT

The full implementation of the Advocacy project begun in '98  
35 Advocacy team members recruited  
6-12 Advocacy workshops held before the end of 1999

#### SARAHJANE HOLZHAUER 2000 PRESIDENT

Represented OELMA at AASL Birmingham (1999), ALA Midwinter in San Antonio (2000), ALA Annual in Chicago (2000)  
Hosted AASL Region III in Cincinnati in April 2000  
Chaired successful Conference including presentation of the Buckeye Children's Book Awards  
Introduced a new OELMA logo and web page design  
Revamped Directors' Procedural Manuals

#### GAYLE GEITGEY 2001 PRESIDENT

Attended regional meetings  
Introduced new advocacy folder  
Established new web page manager job and new listserv job descriptions  
Fought public relations and legislative battle to save the 1983 standards  
Updated Bylaws of OELMA

#### LINDA CORNETTE 2002 PRESIDENT

#### **Our Vision of the Future**

On this, OELMA's twenty-fifth anniversary, the need for OELMA has never been greater nor the stakes ever higher. In 2001 with proposed legislative language that would allow school districts to eliminate library media professionals, OELMA is pulling on the oar with all its might to maintain the 1983 standards for the schools of the new millennium. Fighting the good fight on several fronts, OELMA continues to fund its Advocacy efforts to promote the cause of school library media in difficult political times. By focusing on increasing its membership, developing new leadership and continuing to refine its vision for the future, the flame of OELMA burns brightly in the hearts of its one thousand members and the dream lives on.

The Journey Continues!