

## **UNT Department of Library and Information Sciences Receives Grant to Assist Rural Public Libraries**

May 11, 2010

Denton (UNT), Texas -- The UNT Department of Library and Information Sciences has received a major grant from the Robert and Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust to assist rural public libraries in Texas. Funding from the Priddy Trust in the amount of \$1,599,222 will support a three-year project, Promoting & Enhancing the Advancement of Rural Libraries (PEARL). The goal of the project is to enhance the role of public libraries in targeted rural communities in Texas.

“Public libraries in rural communities are facing enormous challenges,” said Dr. Yunfei Du, the Principal Investigator for the project. “They are experiencing an increase in demand for services while simultaneously dealing with declining tax bases, lack of an educated workforce, decreasing funding, and an aging population.”

“Public libraries are often an under-appreciated and under-utilized resource in rural communities,” said Dr. Herman L. Totten, Dean of the UNT College of Information and director of the project. “To address this problem, libraries need to take a leadership role in creating effective partnerships with local organizations, government agencies and social institutions in order to meet the demands of the range of library users they serve.”

The PEARL project will assist approximately 105 targeted rural libraries to create a Community Outreach Plan and train library staff in the use of the plan. The project will also create a resource center Web site, develop an actual and virtual community for peer interaction among rural librarians, and provide two annual workshops for participating librarians along with two annual forums. The project also provides funding for five graduate students to earn a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) with an emphasis in rural librarianship.

The three year project will address the roles of the small rural library as a community resource, a gathering place for people and as a facilitator for community partnerships. In addition, it will provide avenues of library training and peer interaction for rural library staff. The project will assess how this collaborative model for community outreach enhances the effectiveness of rural library service in Texas.

The Robert and Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust, in Wichita Falls, Texas was established in 2001. The Priddy Charitable Trust has focused on Liberal Arts Education, Pre-K-12 Public Education, Community Healthcare, and Rural Public Libraries. The Trust makes significant grant awards that enable people to make positive changes in their lives and their communities.

## FIVE STUDENTS NEEDED TO ASSIST WITH PROJECT

The UNT Department of Library and Information Sciences (LIS) has received a major grant from the Robert and Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust to assist rural public libraries in Texas. Funding from the Priddy Trust in the amount of \$1,599,222 will support a three-year project, Promoting & Enhancing the Advancement of Rural Libraries (PEARL). The goal of the project is to enhance the role of public libraries in targeted rural communities in Texas. The Principal Investigator on the project is Yunfei Du, Assistant Professor and the Director is Herman Totten, Dean of the College of Information.

To assist with the PEARL project, 5 students who already have a Masters Degree will participate as mentors to project librarians. The students selected will have tuition and fees paid for to complete a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) with all classes delivered online beginning with the Fall 2010 Semester. This is for post-masters study and most of the credits can be applied toward a doctorate. Students will have two courses per semester paid for. They will have their way paid to the Texas Library Association each year, to a workshop at UNT at the beginning of each year, and to a yearly forum with region librarians. Additionally, they will have the following paid for: a webcam, internet access, cell phone plan, and a new laptop.

### HOW TO APPLY

1. Complete the online application [www.lis.unt.edu/pearl/grantapp.php](http://www.lis.unt.edu/pearl/grantapp.php) to be sent direct to the Project Directors. You will be notified of your selection in time to apply to UNT for formal admission to the University and Department of Library and Information Sciences (LIS). This process will be closed as soon as five acceptable candidates are identified and their full admission status is completed.
2. Submit an application to UNT and to LIS. See [www.coi.unt.edu/lischeck](http://www.coi.unt.edu/lischeck) for application details. GRE, MAT or other entrance exams are waived.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

While rural library experience or background is preferred, we recognize there are very few professionals with such experience and that the best applicants may have other qualities that make him/her a strong candidate.

The following criteria will be considered in selecting the successful candidates to participate in this project:

- Rural library experience
- Currently working in rural library
- Interest in rural librarianship
- Commitment to completing the three-year grant-funded project
- Interest in continuing professional education beyond CAS, for example a PhD.
- Evidence this program will help meet your career and educational objectives
- Professional publications and/or other evidence of writing ability
- Strong academic background
- Mentoring or supervisory background
- Good communication skills
- Meet UNT admission criteria
- Completed master's in library science preferred

PEARL application form available at [www.lis.unt.edu/pearl/grantapp.php](http://www.lis.unt.edu/pearl/grantapp.php)  
Direct questions to: [lis-pearl@unt.edu](mailto:lis-pearl@unt.edu)

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- Dean Herman Totten  
Pictured with Dr. Yunfei Du