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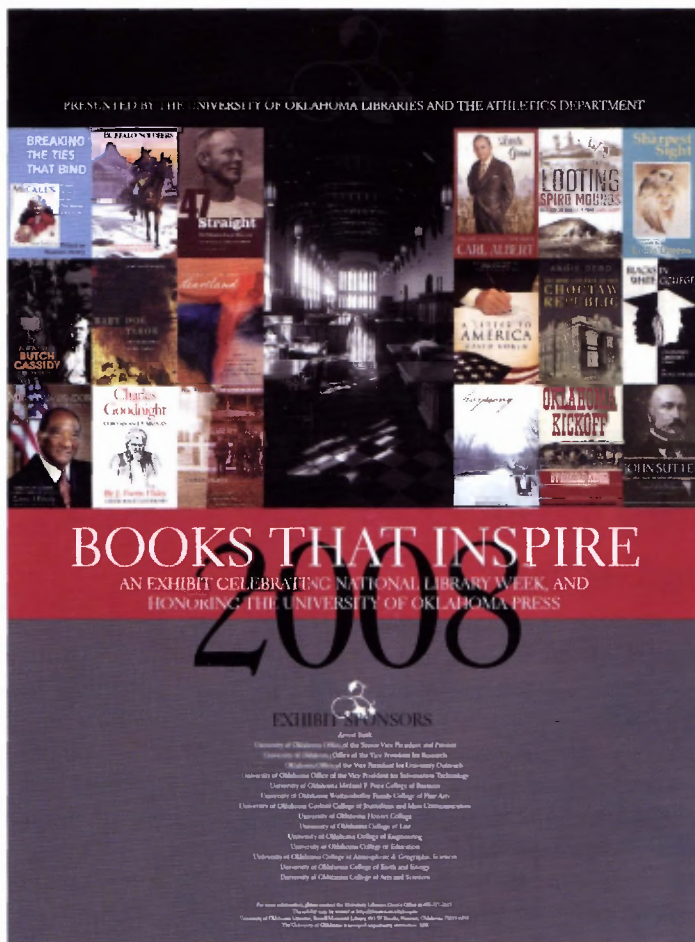
## Books That Inspire

WE Americans love our lists. It is a fascination that provides a living for pollsters, promotes readership for magazines and stimulates discussion over the dinner table. State your preference; inquiring minds want to know.

Dean Sul Lee and the staff of the University of Oklahoma Libraries latched onto this public obsession eight years ago by surveying a select group of OU faculty and staff for the books that had played an important role in their lives. The resulting "Books That Inspire" exhibit has become a much-anticipated annual event, celebrating National Library Week, drawing the curious to the ground floor of Bizzell Memorial and creating an ever-growing list of recommended reading.

The books selected run the gamut of fiction and non-fiction, poetry, prose and drama. Some are in the participant's field of study but are more likely to be general reading, the so-called Great Books among them, with contemporary works as well. Over the years, children's classics have been well represented.

In the inaugural year of 2001, Dean Lee explained, "We all have read books by authors with whose ideas we disagree. We tend to place those books back on the shelves not to be read again. Conversely, we encounter books in which the author's message has a profound influence upon our thinking or the way we view other events or other people. We treasure these books and enthusiastically recommend them to others."



A commemorative poster showcases some of the titles chosen for the eighth annual "Books That Inspire" series. For 2008, the annual list featured books originally published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

That first year, there were only two duplicate selections—*Amadeus: A Drama* and *Crime and Punishment*. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* made its first appearance, to be repeated on several subsequent lists, as would *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie*, John Stuart Mills' *On Liberty*, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* and numerous other favorites.

The following year's exhibit marked the new partnership between the OU Libraries and the Athletics Department to promote libraries and reading as the path to academic achievement at the

University. That co-sponsorship continues.

In addition to displaying each work chosen, the exhibit features a photograph of the contributor, along with a short essay explaining the influence that the book has had in the participant's life. Book lists for all eight years of the project are available online, by going to <http://libraries.ou.edu/exhibits/bti>.

This spring, Books That Inspire VIII honored books originally published by the University of Oklahoma Press. In introducing this special exhibit theme, Dean Lee alluded to the OU Press's preeminent position as a publisher of works relating to American Indians and the American West. The selections, however, also dealt with Oklahoma history, military history, natural science, classical studies, African American studies, gender studies, biography, political science and sports. Some on

the list are OU Press classics, many published before 1970, but contemporary works were prominent also, including fiction by Fred Harris, Louis Owen and Rilla Askew, whose *Dust Bowl* novel, *Harpson*, was a triple selection.

Not long ago, techies began predicting the demise of the printed page. BTI's contributors would disagree. Imagine them going online to curl up with Harper Lee's timeless tale of Scout, Atticus Finch and Boo Radley, thrill to the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay, pause to ponder *A Silent Spring*. We can only hope that there will be Books That Inspire for many years to come.

—CJB