

From the Editor

compiled by Plummer Alston "Al" Jones, Jr., Editor

by Deana Astle and Elizabeth Skinner, Guest Editors

Commission on the Future of Libraries and the Book

Thinking, talking, researching, and writing about the future of libraries and the book is no easy endeavor. Just ask the members of the Commission on the Future of Libraries and the Book. In 2001, North Carolina Library Association President Ross Holt challenged interested NCLA members to assemble as a Commission to explore the future of the book and the future of libraries given the impact of technology.

Members of the Commission represented academic and public librarians all eager to delve into the uncertainties of the future. Just wrapping commission members' minds around the many issues was a lengthy process (funding sources, digitization, data migration, marketing, competition, the missions of different types of libraries, the public's perception of libraries, and on and on). Midway through the process, one thing was certain: the future of libraries is not clear.

This issue of *North Carolina Libraries* reports the findings of the Commission. Commission chair Dr. Robert Burgin summarizes the results of a Web-based survey conducted in 2003. While there are no surprises, it is useful to reflect on library professionals' concerns and to see how they differ by type of library.

Walt Crawford's engaging Ogilvie Lecture from the 2003 NCLA Biennial Conference is published in this issue.

A lively table talk from the same NCLA conference stirred up a debate among Commission members, Walt Crawford, Wake County Library Director Tom Moore, and Forsyth County Public Library Deputy Director Dave Fergusson. The Commission invited Moore and Fergusson to carry on the debate as a Point and Counterpoint on the future of the public library.

Commission member Frannie Ashburn with the North Carolina Center for the Book has compiled remarks from a panel that was hosted by the Wake County Public Library. Here, journalist J. Peder Zane, library professor Robert Burgin, *News & Observer* columnist Paul Gilster, and science fiction writer John Kessel offer stimulating observations about the future of books, reading, and libraries.

Finally, David Durant, Documents Librarian at East Carolina University, provides a solid history of the evolution of the Federal Depository System in libraries and how technology will impact its future.

Members of the Commission on the Future of Libraries and the Book hope that we have inspired librarians to think about the future of libraries and the profession. We know that North Carolina has many committed professionals who work daily to ensure a vital future for libraries, books, and information in whatever form it may take.

North Carolina Commission for the Future of Libraries and the Book:

Robert Burgin, School of Library and Information Sciences, N.C. Central University (Chair)

Frannie Ashburn, State Library of North Carolina

Deana Astle, East Carolina University

Dale Cousins, Wake County Public Libraries

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