Foreword

Jinnie Y. Davis and David M. Paynter, Guest Editors

The concept of measuring a library's performance by objectively quantifying its outputs — its services and programs — was introduced to the library profession at least two decades ago. The overflow audiences at two sessions on performance measurement at the American Library Association's annual conference in Chicago attest to the continuing interest of librarians with the use of output, rather than the traditional input, measures of how well our libraries are performing. With the newly published manual *Measuring Academic Library Performance* to supplement the 1987 *Output Measures for Public Libraries*, librarians now have at least two basic tools to draw upon in carrying out performance measurement in a relatively easy, inexpensive, and pretested manner.

The timing of this issue of *North Carolina Libraries* is intended to keep the idea of performance measurement alive in the minds of North Carolina librarians by exploring various aspects and applications in several types of libraries. First, Sharon Baker differentiates between macroevaluative and microevaluative measures and challenges us to go beyond the former — the collection of quantitative data to explain *how well* a library operates — to incorporate microscale studies that will help us answer the questions of *how* and *why* the library operates in that way. Baker is also the co-author, with F. W. Lancaster, of the second edition of another seminal work on library evaluation, *Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services*.

Measurement implies the need for quantitative data, and Kitty Smith explores the need for reliability in data collection by public libraries. In particular, she explains the role of the nationally coordinated Federal-State Cooperative System for Public Library Data in ensuring that comparative data on public libraries will be available to help future decision makers.

Jinnie Y. Davis, Library Research in North Carolina editor of *North Carolina Libraries*, is Assistant Director for Planning & Research at the North Carolina State University Libraries, and David M. Paynter is Director of the New Hanover County Public Library in Wilmington.

Public libraries in general have had a longer history of performance measurement than other types of libraries. Three library directors describe their experiences in assessing public libraries of North Carolina, with sometimes surprising results. Val Lovett reports on data collection on output measures in the Wake County Public Libraries. James Govern (Stanly County Public Library), reporting on the Childers/Van House multiple constituencies model and on other output measures developed by the Public Library Association, shows how even a small public library can make effective use of performance measures. Patsy Hansel discusses the use of the Bunge/Murfin method of unobtrusive testing of reference services at the Cumberland County Public Library & Information Center.

The application of performance measurement to youth services has not received a great deal of attention in the literature. Rebecca Taylor offers a step-by-step approach to undertaking such measurement techniques and includes an evaluative review of the relevant literature.

Another area deserving more investigation is the use of performance measures in the technical services. Croneis and Wang explore issues dealing with the efficiency and effectiveness of technical services and emphasize the need for libraries operating in an automated environment to take a holistic view of performance measurement.

Automation in libraries offers us entirely new ways to collect quantitative data for gauging the performance of a library system. Ulmschneider and Mullin examine online performance measures and describe the system-monitoring tools and their management uses at the Triangle Research Libraries Network.

Two articles on academic libraries employ the case study and the survey methodologies to increase our understanding of performance measures. Patricia Kelley describes her experiences with one of the best-known examples of the application of performance measures in an academic library, at George Washington University. She emphasizes the importance of educating the library staff before establishing a performance

measures program. A continuing and widespread reliance on traditional evaluation programs, existing simultaneously with a belief in the importance of true performance measurement, are seen in the results of Sally Ann Strickler's survey of academic library administrators.

Finally, Cynthia Levine's annotated bibliography offers the reader wishing to delve into the literature on performance measurement some recommended points of departure. We regret the lack of coverage of school librarianship in this issue, stemming from a paucity of research and applications related to output measures in that area.

While this issue of *NCL* was being edited, state and local governments were in the process of attempting to deal with budget reductions and demands for improved services. The next decade threatens to impose further budgetary restrictions and demands for accountability upon most libraries. Librarians will find it imperative to state clearly their goals in terms of services and programs to users, to devise ways of measuring progress toward those desired outcomes, and to demonstrate to their funding agencies both the value and effectiveness of their organizations. We hope that this *NCL* issue will impel library managers to think about the assessment portion of this process, and to add performance measures to their tools for rational decision making.