Foreword

Harry Tuchmayer, Guest Editor

Supporting the support staff is not an easy proposition. The one thing that shines throughout this issue of *North Carolina Libraries* is the fact that an effective program of staff training and development takes a tremendous amount of time and effort on the part of supervisors and staff alike. These articles are meant to demonstrate the importance of such an effort. What you will see in the following pages is an attempt to address some of the issues that are pertinent to the problem of "supporting the support staff."

Kathleen Jackson, in "The Training Investment" does an excellent job of summarizing the problems supervisors face when confronted with the issue of training new or existing staff. Jackson's piece should be read and re-read for encouragement and as an outline for what follows.

Gail Terwilliger, in "Training for Children's Services," looks at the issue of training a specific employee and examines the thorough step-by-step approach Cumberland County uses in its training program. As stated by Jackson and emphasized by Terwillerger, training starts at the point of hire. She reminds us of the importance of conducting an organized and well-thought-out hiring program. As we'll see in Duncan Smith's article, training is a continuous process, and Terwilliger provides a good example of one approach in her description of the Behavioral Observation Scale.

As Jackson states, "an effective training program requires a partnership between management and staff," and one place where that partnership is formalized is through the work plan. Benjamin Speller and James Colt, in "The Role of the Work Plan in Assessing Staff Development and Continuing Education Needs for Library Support Staff," look at work plans and their relationship to staff development, giving us a model for beginning the process of opening up communication between supervisors and support staff.

But this is the real world, and things do not always go according to Hoyle. Lois Walker's "All I Really Needed to Know, I Didn't Learn in Library School," reminds us of the importance of on-the-job training. In a humorous but insightful look at the new professional's first few months on the reference desk, Walker demonstrates the real importance of appropriate training for all levels of support staff.

Providing one solution to Walker's woes, Mary McAfee and Julie White, in "Reference 101," describe their two-day workshop designed to teach basic reference skills to the support staff.

Duncan Smith shares the results of a meeting of focus groups which indicate that public library directors and their support staff agree not only on the need for training, but also on whose responsibility this training is. Whether or not this is being done is the question he asks us to consider.

In her discussion of the much neglected role that procedure manuals play in supporting the staff, Marie Spencer convinces us that it should be every library's highest priority to maintain a current and useful procedure manual. Perhaps a good procedure manual would have given Lois Walker something to fall back on in her hour of need.

Anita Bell looks at Wake County Schools' new program of training student assistants in a high school library. Bell's description of the program should prompt other school districts to consider such programs.

Judie Stoddard provides us with a capsule history of the North Carolina Library Association's newest section, the North Carolina Library Paraprofessional Association.

Finally, in Point/Counterpoint, we look at the issue, "Do Workshops Work?" Tom Moore discusses the positive contribution workshops make in training and educating staff. Harry Tuchmayer questions whether or not the right employees benefit from them.

Hopefully, we have given you a lot to think about. There is no question that our libraries cannot run without the contributions of the support staff. How we contribute to their growth and development might just make the difference in whether or not any library can achieve success in meeting its own goals and objectives.