

The articles in this fiftieth anniversary issue of *North Carolina Libraries* represent merely a sampling of the rich history of libraries in the Tar Heel state. From 1701, when the Reverend Thomas Bray offered for public use a small collection of books at Bath, to the present, when libraries throughout the state provide access to recorded human knowledge in a multitude of formats, libraries and the people who operate them have fascinating stories waiting to be told.

Foreword ...

by Robert G. Anthony, Jr.,
Guest Editor

Although a handful of Tar Heel libraries and librarians have attracted the examining eye of the historian, too few have been studied for us to have a clear understanding of our professional heritage. Nor have we been sufficiently instructed and inspired by accounts of our collective past to aspire to the heights that a profession with pride and self-knowledge may attain.

Yet, if interest in this anniversary issue of *North Carolina Libraries*, with its emphasis on library history, is an accurate indication of curiosity about our professional roots, then we Tar Heels are eager to know where we have come from and who we have been. A number of our colleagues are actively investigating library history. Several studies of individual existing libraries have recently been completed and were offered for this issue. We very much regret that space limitations did not allow inclusion of them and similar contemporary local library histories. Also, an important examination of the North Carolina Negro Library Association and the acceptance of its members into the North Carolina Library Association in the 1950s, originally planned as an article for this issue, unfortunately was not completed by press time.

Such widespread, ongoing interest in library history is encouraging. If the members of the North Carolina Library Association and the readers of *North Carolina Libraries* undertake to record their past with the enthusiasm and talent with which they tackle the other challenges their profession presents, then the documentation of our heritage will be impressive indeed when, in another fifty years, *North Carolina Libraries* prepares to celebrate its centennial.

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