

Over to You . . .

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor Bradburn:

Congratulations to you, Robert Anthony, and other contributors to the Spring issue covering the history of libraries in North Carolina. As a former editor of our state journal (1965-68), I found your article "On the Way to Becoming" of special interest. Although you do not mention it in this article, the microfilming of *NCL* began during my editorship. I recall signing a contract with University Microfilms in Ann Arbor, MI, to microfilm issues of *NCL* beginning with Vol. 1, then mailing issues during the first 25 years of publication to UMI.

Charles Adams, then director of Jackson Library at UNC-Greensboro, was president of NCLA and he, together with members of the Executive Board, gave me virtually complete latitude in editorial decisions, a condition which made my job much easier than it would have been otherwise. *NCL* has shown marked improvement during the past 25 years. Given the dedication of future NCLA leaders and editors, I am confident it will retain its position as one of the leading state library journals in the nation.

PS: May I suggest that a forthcoming issue be devoted to church libraries, a type of library usually neglected in library literature.

Sincerely,

Alva Stewart
Reference Librarian
F.D. Bluford Library
North Carolina Agricultural
& Technical State University
Greensboro, NC 27411

Dear Frances:

Congratulations! It was wonderful news in Janet Freeman's column that *North Carolina Libraries* has been recognized by the American Library Association as the 1991 H.W. Wilson Periodical Award.

You and your editorial team have done a wonderful job. I very much enjoyed my opportunity to work with you as a guest editor for the Spring 1991 issue.

Best wishes,

Timothy L. Coggins
Associate Director
& Clinical Assistant Professor of Law
Law Library
The University of North Carolina at Ch-H.

Congratulations on winning the Wilson Award for *North Carolina Libraries*. I know how thrilled you must be. *NCL* is certainly a fine and impressive publication, well deserving of the award.

Carol Cubberley
Editor
Mississippi Libraries

Dear Mr. Anthony:

On behalf of the Executive Mansion Fine Arts Committee and the Executive Mansion Fund, Inc., I want to thank you for including Rose Simon's review of the book *North Carolina's Executive Mansion ... The First Hundred Years* in the Winter 1991 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*.

I think Ms. Simon's review is the best-written one we have been privileged to have, and I am writing to thank her also.

With no budget for advertising the book, every time it is mentioned in a publication such as *North Carolina Libraries*, our sales get a boost.

Thank you again for helping to promote this new Executive Mansion centennial history book.

Yours sincerely,

Marie Sharpe Ham
Curator & Executive Director
Executive Mansion Fund, Inc.

Responses to Howard McGinn's "Point: The Mourning After" ...

I read your "Point" essay, "The Mourning After," in the Winter 1991 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*, and I think you were wrong in at least two of your suggestions: 1) that NCLA should hold its conference every year; and 2) that NCLA should "control access to membership in the organization."

I left North Carolina for Virginia over two and a half years ago, and I am now in my second year on the Virginia Library Association Council. I have met many bright, energetic, thoughtful Virginia librarians, much like the ones I know in North Carolina. However, VLA, which has a conference every year, does not have the breadth of activity that NCLA does. This became apparent to me fairly soon after I arrived, but it took me a while to decide that much of NCLA's

strength lies in its biennial conference, and its biennial terms of office.

Two years give NCLA's units — sections, round tables, committees — time to get organized to accomplish something. That's where the work of the association goes on, Howard, and where the association's strategies are developed. NCLA doesn't need an every-year conference to accomplish that, and I would argue that an every-year conference would be a handicap.

An association that concentrates on annual conferences is likely to expend an inordinate amount of people's energy on that one event, to the detriment of grassroots activities — workshops, publications, committees — where the most important work of the association often occurs. Another of NCLA's strengths is its large school library membership in NCASL, which has the non-NCLA conference year available for its own biennial conference.

Biennial conferences in NCLA are financially solid, and proceeds are returned to the conference to ensure that. Biennial conferences also attract more exhibitors than annual conferences do, as we in North Carolina used to hear again and again from vendors, and as I have now witnessed first-hand from the other side of the border.

And in Virginia, an annual conference state, my one-year basic membership dues are the same as I pay for a two-year membership in NCLA.

The second suggestion with which I strongly disagree is that NCLA should "control access to membership in the association If we do not respect our own credentials, how can we expect others to respect us as a distinct profession?"

Why a gratuitous slap at the non-MLS people who do two-thirds of the work in libraries, Howard? Is setting up artificial barriers between different levels of workers in libraries going to make us the powerful profession you envision? I think the opposite is true. Librarians become powerful as the libraries they work in become powerful institutions (as many already are). And libraries become powerful institutions only when library staffs work together as effectively as possible.

The thrust of management literature over the past decade or more has been on team-building. If we want to build effective (i.e., "powerful?") organiza-

tions, we are urged to flatten organizational structures, and to facilitate working together, recognizing the strengths that all members of the group contribute to the organization. Those of us who have graduated from schools of library science (or whatever they may be calling themselves these days) should have special knowledge and skills that we contribute to our libraries. If our performance doesn't illustrate the benefits of the degree, no amount of rhetoric at "professional" meetings or in library periodicals is going to make us powerful.

NCLA is the North Carolina Library Association. It exists "to promote libraries, and library and information services, and librarianship; and to champion intellectual freedom and literacy programs": (ARTICLE II. PURPOSE. Constitution of the North Carolina Library Association). NCLA has always been open to all library personnel, as well as to library supporters such as trustees, Friends, and vendors, and it has been energized by all of these groups. Perhaps there is strength to be gained from the fact that librarianship is not a traditional profession, with membership in its professional organizations limited to an "elite" group.

The fact that librarianship does not have the "power" that corresponds with things such as higher salaries has much more to do with librarianship's history as a female-intensive line of work than it does with the fact that we have democratic professional organizations. Let's make certain we know where the real enemy is, and attack that, rather than hamper the work of our comrades in arms with misguided "friendly" fire.

— Patsy Hansel, Director
Williamsburg Regional Library
Williamsburg, Virginia.
(President, NCLA, 1987-89)

When I first started reading "The Mourning After," I found myself jumping ahead to read the punch line. At about the fourth paragraph, I realized

that there wasn't going to be one.

The article had some good points and some correct facts. But in many instances, the wrong conclusions were drawn.

Since I am a paraprofessional and chair of the Paraprofessional Roundtable, I would like to address the statement in the article that "access to membership in NCLA should be controlled." After working through the hurt and anger, I am left with a number of unanswered questions, the first being "who would be accepted for membership?" Was McGinn proposing an all-MLS-holding organization? Would this mean the Trustees and Friends of the Library would be excluded? These people are some of the most politically influential people in libraries. What happens when they are excluded from membership? Or was McGinn proposing excluding only paraprofessionals?

The article speaks of NCLA concentrating in two areas — one being that of lobbying. When speaking of lobbying, numbers are clout. One thousand members is better than one hundred members. Just how does NCLA gain lobbying power and clout by cutting back on its membership?

Where does the concept of teamwork fit into this picture? Does not "united we stand, divided we fall" apply to libraries as well as nations? Why set up artificial barriers in libraries — the "us against them" syndrome?

Over the past eighteen months, many states — through the leadership of ALA — have encouraged more participation by paraprofessionals through state associations. If North Carolina were to exclude paraprofessionals from the state library association, it would be like taking a step backward.

I believe, as do many librarians, that paraprofessionals should have opportunities for career development; should have a forum for discussing library-related issues; and should be encouraged to network with other library employees to talk about solutions for problems which occur in libraries. Where does the paraprofessional turn for these opportunities, encouragement, and forums if not to the state library association?

There are skills other than those of librarianship which are needed to achieve superior library service in North Carolina. Paraprofessionals are providing these skills and are helping libraries to remain open. Over half of a library's work force is paraprofessional. I cannot foresee a time when that work force will be one hundred percent MLS-holders.

To read an article that promotes excluding the paraprofessional from the state library association simply makes no sense at all. And I am very happy to report that obviously the leadership of the North Carolina Library Association agrees. At the Executive Board meeting of NCLA, held at Morehead City on May 1, the Board unanimously agreed that paraprofessionals do have a place in the North Carolina Association and there are no intentions to exclude this important segment of the library workforce from membership in NCLA.

It will take all of us — the librarians and the paraprofessionals — to continue to give superior service to the citizens of North Carolina. We can only do it together — as a united workforce — not as a segregated workforce with "us" against "them." And I would encourage the state librarian to use the power and prestige of his office to promote this togetherness.

— Meralyn Meadows
Administrative Assistant
Stanly County Public Library
133 East Main Street
Albemarle, NC 28001

Apologia

Editor's Note: Please note that the photographs on page 37 of the Spring issue of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* are reversed. Pictured left is Nellie M. Rowe, Librarian at Greensboro Public Library; Pictured below is Mrs. Mollie Huston Lee, Librarian at Shaw University.

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES invites your comments. Please address and sign with your name and position all correspondence to: Frances B. Bradburn, Editor, *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES*, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity. Deadline dates are the copy deadlines for the journal: February 10, May 10, August 10, and November 10.

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

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