

Mr. David Fergusson
NCLA Vice President-President Elect
Forsyth County Public Library
660 W. Fifth St.
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Dear Mr. Fergusson:

We could not fail to notice that this year's biennial conference begins on Yom Kippur. This is the most significant Holy Day of the Jewish calendar.

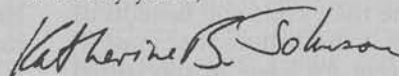
NCLA would not schedule a conference on Christmas, Easter, or even Independence Day. Even though the dates for NCLA are set two or more years in advance, it is a simple matter to find out when major religious holidays fall in a given year. Librarians, of all people, should consult one of the many resources that have this information. There is no excuse for this oversight.

The undersigned are personally offended by this carelessness. Many, if not all, of our Jewish colleagues will not be attending the conference this year. The quality of NCLA is diminished by this lack of inclusiveness, and by the absence of so many members.

We urge that NCLA events be scheduled with a calendar showing religious holidays in

Furthermore, we would like NCLA, as a body, to print an apology for this insensitive mistake in the next issue of *North Carolina Libraries*.

Sincerely yours,



Katherine B. Johnson, Reference Assistant

Additional Signatures of Durham County Library staff:

Kathi Sippin
Joanne Abel
Nancy L. Blood
Anne Berkley
Carol Passmore
Jean Amelung

North Carolina Libraries

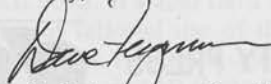
To the Editor:

On behalf of the North Carolina Library Association I would like to apologize to our members of the Jewish faith for the unfortunate scheduling of the 1995 NCLA Biennial Conference in conflict with Yom Kippur.

The conflict was an unintentional oversight, but in hindsight I am sure I would consider it very inconsiderate were I in their shoes.

The Association will take measures to see that no such oversight occurs in the future. The dates of the 1997 Conference in Raleigh, October 7-10, do not occur on any major religious holidays. Again, the apologies of the Association are extended to all who were affected.

Sincerely,



David G. Fergusson, President
North Carolina Library Association

COUNTER POINT



by Harry Tuchmayer, Column Editor

I am certainly not the spokesperson for the association but, having talked with Katherine Johnson and six other concerned librarians at the Durham County Library, I've decided that the issue raised in their letter is one that needs to be addressed. I also spoke to Dave Fergusson, by the way, and being the perfect gentleman, he said "go for it!"

Now before some of you get too upset with anything I might say (or not say, for that matter), let me make it perfectly clear that I didn't attend this year's NCLA conference, precisely because of this scheduling fiasco. In fact, when I first saw the flier announcing the conference, I couldn't quite believe it. You see, right after I came to North Carolina fifteen years ago, the association did the very same thing — they scheduled the conference on Yom Kippur. Recognizing their error too late, NCLA promised very sincerely that they would never do it again. (I've since found out that, while they may have promised, they neglected to write it down. Consequently no mention of potential holiday conflicts was included in the conference planning handbook.)

At that time I was new to the area, and my director made it clear that she thought it was important for me to attend NCLA. I don't think she was being insensitive, nor do I think she was the least bit prejudiced. She just believed that the information and networking opportunities available at the conference were important enough that I should make every effort to attend. So I did. And with a brief stop at the Charlotte synagogue in between sessions, and a rather unusual RTSS breakfast where I repeatedly declined very gracious offers to eat (you're required to fast for the day), I was able to fulfill both my professional and religious obligations — or at least I thought I did.

In those days, unlike the current climate, compromise wasn't a dirty word and the "melting pot" was still the prevailing model. I was quite used to walking that fine line between retaining my own heritage and conforming to the larger society. It also helped that I wasn't very religious and had only one very young child. More importantly, I was still young and naive enough to believe the association when they promised to be more careful next time.

Well, this was the next time, and guess what, NCLA forgot. At first, I was a little upset. I mean, with all our talk about multiculturalism, diversity, and sexual orientation sensitivity, you would think that we could work around the major Jewish holiday. After all, how hard is it for reference experts to check a few calendars?

But the more I thought about it, the more I decided I just don't give a damn anymore! Call it benign neglect or say it's just too difficult to keep up with all the special holidays and unique customs an ethnically diverse society has, I don't care!

That's right, who needs to network? I'm considerably older now and I've met everyone I'll ever need to know. As far as I can tell, no one is any worse off because they missed an opportunity to meet me! In fact, I doubt anyone suffered because I couldn't be there.

Sure, I missed an opportunity to talk with vendors and try to sell a few more ads in *North Carolina Libraries*, but I don't care. I don't work on commission. Since I couldn't meet with anyone on the budget committee, as far as I know, NCLA can probably afford the loss in potential revenue.

I certainly didn't need to see the exhibits! I buy plenty of books and equipment from the salesmen and companies I'm already familiar with. And those other suppliers I never heard of didn't need to sell me anything I couldn't get from somebody I already know.

I'm glad I stayed home, not because I'm tired of reminding others that recognizing diversity means acknowledging religious traditions other than your own, but because this time I did what I should have done fifteen years ago. I spent time with my family, reflecting on what it really means to be a concerned, caring and forgiving human being.