
The Spread of Public Libraries:

The Community of the Book in North Carolina, 1900-1960

by Patrick M. Valentine

"Perhaps no deficiency in the Southeast is more marked than its lack of books and libraries and the consequent absence of reading habits."

— Howard W. Odum, *Southern Regions of the United States*, 1936.

Before there can be a community of the book, there must be books — and access to books. Public libraries were almost unknown in North Carolina until 1900. The state was rural and poor, and libraries of any and all sorts were few and far between.¹ There had been books in North Carolina almost since the first European settlers, but these were in private or religious collections. During the nineteenth century, a few communities had tried to establish literary societies and libraries, but they were short-lived. Even where continuing attempts were made to establish some form of library, as in Wilmington, they were not publicly governed or supported.² Such libraries were by their nature restricted libraries and the needs of the larger community were ignored.³ An ambitious and promising youngster might gain access to a wealthy neighbor's private collection, or to a college collection in the few places that had one, but access to books beyond what one's family or church could afford was limited for most people in North Carolina. Other than reading the Bible or the newspaper, the community of the book hardly existed.⁴

This article will sketch the spread of public libraries in North Carolina. The German philosopher Jargen Habermas has argued that democracy progresses best when there is a public forum for

open communication.⁵ Public libraries provide such an arena, in the sense of being repositories and disseminators of retrievable knowledge and in that, such knowledge underlies, for Habermas, "ideal speech situations" and democratic norms.⁶ But for there to be any practical results from these forums, there must be public libraries throughout the governing polity, in this case the state of North Carolina. For historians, on the other hand, the establishment of a public library is an index of community wealth, self-confidence, and literacy. So it follows that studying the origin and development of public libraries can provide insight not only to a community's openness to communication and the spread of democracy, but also to local resources and attitudes.⁷

By the 1870s, Wilmington and Asheville had the beginnings of viable subscription libraries which were soon relatively substantial and well-organized. A few other towns also laid claims to having libraries. The Vesper Reading Club opened a subscription-based library in Lenoir in 1875, but it declined after 1900. Salisbury had a Library Association from 1877 to 1881, when it turned the collection over to the Y.M.C.A. In 1880 a box or boxes of books were sent South and the village of Highlands had the beginnings of a library. Charles Hallett Wing, a retired professor, established a library in Ledger in 1886 or 1887 using 12,000 books dis-

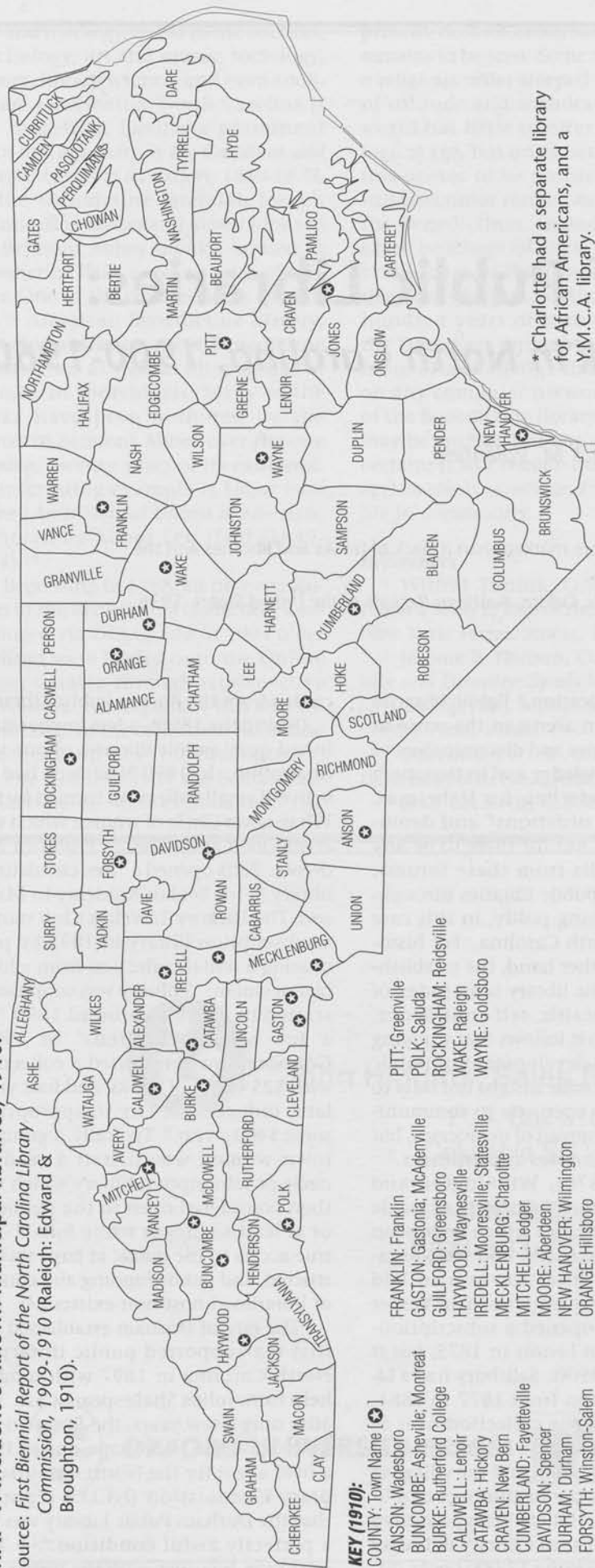
carded from the Boston Public Library.⁸

During the 1890s, a few towns established quasi-public libraries of one sort or another. In 1890 New Bern had an active if small collection formed by the Whatsoever Circle of women which was abandoned about 1902. Professor Andrew L. Betts opened a "free circulating" library at his Beulah Academy in Madison. The Hickory Travelers Club started a subscription library in 1893 by purchasing a rental collection from a local businessman. A library was supposedly started in Franklin around 1890 "by a few school children." In 1903, Goldsboro women started a collection with \$25 worth of books, and four years later induced the city to appropriate some \$400 a year.⁹ Typically, a group of town women would start a reading circle or subscription library which was then considered open to the public — or at least to proper white folk.¹⁰ But true access to the public at large was restricted, and public funding and control of libraries almost non-existent.¹¹

The city of Durham established the first tax-supported public library in North Carolina in 1897 with modest help from Julius Shakespeare Carr. But after only a few years, the librarian admitted it was in poor shape, and in 1910 a field agent for the North Carolina Library Commission (NCLC) reported that the Durham Public Library was "in a perfectly awful condition."¹² The next year, however, with the hiring of a

MAP 1: Incident of known municipal libraries, 1910.

Source: First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, 1909-1910 (Raleigh: Edward & Broughton, 1910).



* Charlotte had a separate library for African Americans, and a Y.M.C.A. library.

trained librarian, Lillian Baker Griggs, the situation improved. In 1912, she reported a collection of 4,900 books and a circulation of 7,250 in a city with a white population of 11,372.¹³ County residents began using it in 1914.¹⁴

The capital city of Raleigh was next to open a public library; indeed, the budding rivalry between Durham and Raleigh contributed to a race between the two cities to create a library. But Raleigh's 1896 campaign fell short. Philanthropy once more saved the day, through a far more generous benefactor than Durham enjoyed. Richard Raney donated \$40,000 for a library and books in memory of his wife Olivia. The library opened in 1901 and by 1908, 11,846 local citizens enjoyed 9,690 books which circulated 27,270 times.¹⁵

The 1900s were the initial seed time for public library creation in North Carolina. The thirty public, society, or Y.M.C.A. libraries operating in 1910 were Aberdeen (1907), Asheville (1879), Charlotte (1901),¹⁶ Durham (1897), Fayetteville (1908),¹⁷ Franklin (1901), Gastonia (1904), Goldsboro (1907), Greensboro (1902), Greenville (1906),¹⁸ Hickory (1906), Hillsboro (1910), Ledger (1886), Lenoir (1875), McAdenville (1908), Montreat (1905), Mooresville (1897), New Bern (1906), Raleigh (1901), Reidsville (1909), Rutherford College (1907),¹⁹ Saluda (1894), Spencer (Y.M.C.A., 1908), Statesville (1907), Wadesboro (1905), Waynesville (n.d.), Wilmington (1907), and Winston-Salem (1905). Most of these were not, in fact, tax-supported public libraries and held an average of only 2,700 books each, which meant that some were very small indeed.²⁰ Librarians and library supporters were full of hope and determined to accomplish mighty things.

First in any listing of North Carolina librarians must come that whirlwind of enthusiasm, intelligence, political acumen, publicity, and steadfastness, Louis Round Wilson.²¹ In 1904 Wilson teamed with Annie F. Petty of State Normal and Industrial College, Greensboro, and Annie Smith Ross of the Charlotte Public Library to establish the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA).²² Wilson and Petty convinced the state to create the North Carolina Library Commission in 1909. Wilson served as Commission chairman until 1916. The community of the book, at least as far as librarians and libraries were concerned, was starting to come together.

An important aspect of library formation, already alluded to, was the role played by women's groups, specifically the umbrella Federation of Women's Clubs. The public role of women was quite circumspect in the South, but charity and cultural work were encouraged.²³ After 1900, the Federation began encouraging the formation of local public libraries in North Carolina. Aware that most of the state was rural, the Federation also sent traveling libraries of books from town to town. Traveling libraries, with all the attendant problems of coordination and local lending without a librarian, were not the solution.²⁴ Nonetheless, traveling and package libraries continued to function well

until after the Depression.

Municipal libraries continued to increase in numbers, but had little impact beyond town borders. Since the state was still 81 percent rural in 1920, their effectiveness was limited. The legislature permitted counties to contract with towns for library service after 1917, but counties themselves could not operate libraries until 1927. In 1920 there were forty-nine white municipal libraries and two for blacks. Thirty-five of the forty-nine white libraries were free and thirteen were subscription.²⁵ Greensboro, Charlotte, and Durham were among the first to extend services to the county; significantly, all had strong librarians at their helm. As the former librarian at Charlotte and then State Librarian, Mary B. Palmer, insisted in 1921 "the movement of county libraries [must] be pushed in every possible way."²⁶ Raleigh did not extend county service until 1926. Even in 1928, residents of only fourteen counties could count on library service. Wilson pointed out to Griggs that "it should be made very clear that, while the beginning is a good one, the support is in no sense adequate and the personnel and book collections have not been built up as they should be."²⁷ No county matched the \$1.00 per person standard for library service adopted by the American Library Association. The statewide average was only \$.04.²⁸ At least as far as public libraries went, there was little support for any community of the book.

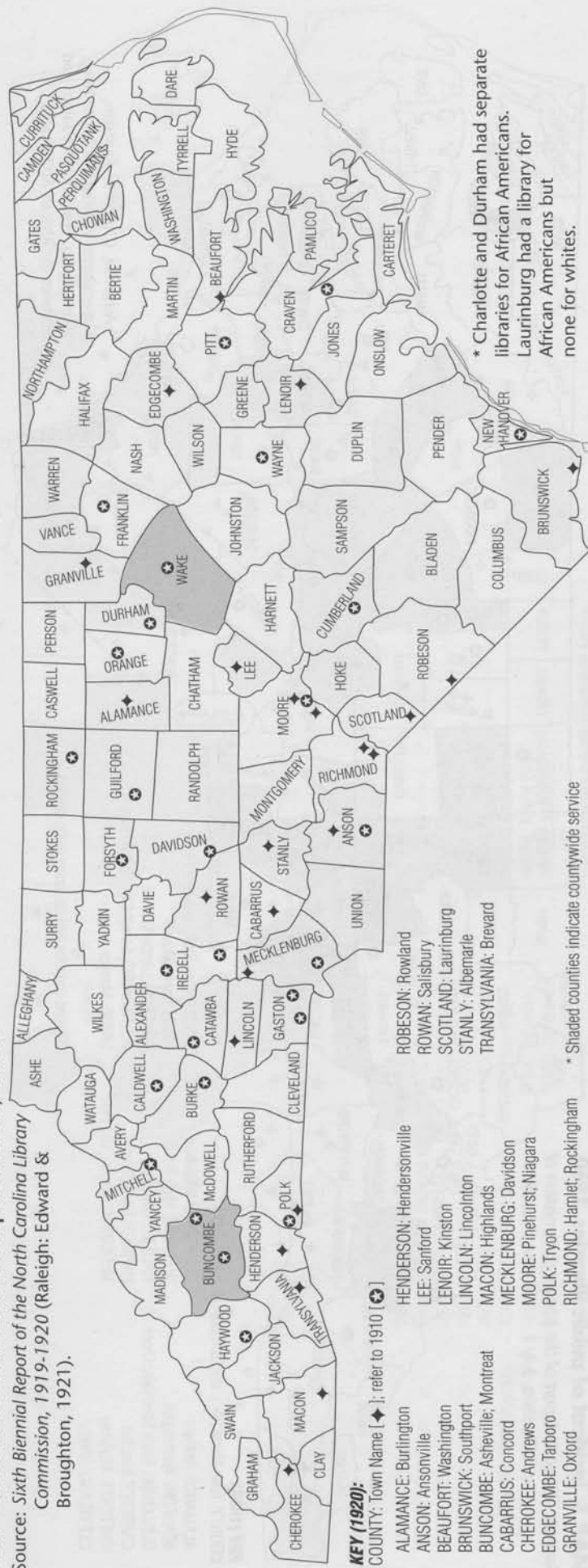
In 1923, Dr. Wilson delivered a blast that shook the library community and, more importantly, stirred the populace at large. While attending a conference in Massachusetts, he discovered the Salem Public Library had more books than the total of the seven largest public libraries in North Carolina.²⁹ He vigorously called for remedial action. Out of the controversy rose the Citizens' Library Movement (CLM), North Carolina's most sustained campaign to increase the number of public libraries and enlarge their collections.

CLM suffered through a slow beginning. Then, without assuming formal control, Frank Porter Graham, President of the University of North Carolina, energized it and led the campaign for public library service. When Graham gave an oration at the opening of a new library in Greenville in 1930, for instance, he was "so inspiring that everyone wants to help develop their library."³⁰ "Our civilization has reached the stage," Governor O. Max Gardner intoned in 1929, "where it has needs which are distinctly above and beyond the bread and butter line of bare necessities."³¹ Partly as a result of this popular pressure, North Carolina had seventy-seven public libraries in 1936. The CLM could point to the creation of libraries in Northampton and Granville counties as the result of long-sustained citizen efforts led by local women.³²

Yet, as was true of most public services in the South, public libraries remained grossly underfunded, understaffed, and underbooked.³³ The Depression took a fearsome toll of library bud-

MAP 2: Incident of known municipal libraries, 1920.

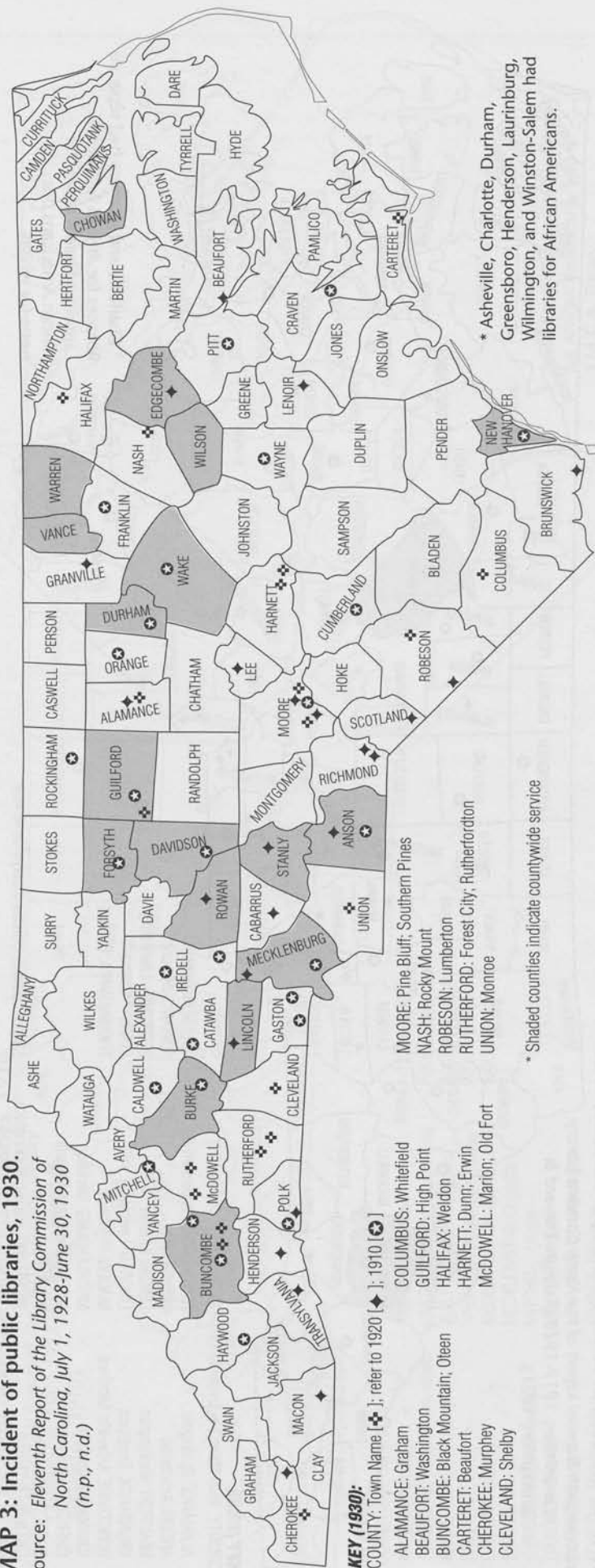
Source: Sixth Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, 1919-1920 (Raleigh: Edward & Broughton, 1921).



* Charlotte and Durham had separate libraries for African Americans. Laurinburg had a library for African Americans but none for whites.

MAP 3: Incident of public libraries, 1930.

Source: *Eleventh Report of the Library Commission of North Carolina, July 1, 1928-June 30, 1930* (n.p., n.d.)



gets, to the degree that the Charlotte library lost its telephone. Although state tax revenues had yet to fall significantly, Graham wrote in 1930 to Wilson, then in London, that "the State of North Carolina has already become a State of Hysteria with regard to public expenditures."³⁴ County and municipal funding for public libraries declined. Nonetheless, "librarians used their ingenuity to serve more people with paralyzed budgets." Federal aid, a new element in the financial mix, was both important and insufficient.³⁵

As the Depression eased in the middle 1930s, hope sprung anew among the communities of the book. Towns such as Wilson and Burlington breathed new life into the growth of public libraries. In Wilson County's not atypical case, a woman's club library became a public library and employed in 1939 a professional librarian for the first time. When a taxpayers group induced county commissioners in Rockingham County to slash funds in 1939, local citizens instead forced a 68 percent increase in library appropriations.³⁶

By 1940 half (51 percent) of the state's people had access to a public library.³⁷ Book stock and circulation statewide were 940,877 and 5,992,548, compared to 435,142 and 2,942,871 in 1930. This represented more than a twofold increase in both categories. North Carolina public libraries had .26 books per person versus .14 and a circulation of 1.68 per capita versus .93 in 1940 and 1930 respectively. The community of the book was slowly gaining strength despite the Depression but remained quite weak by national standards. A major development with implications for the future was legislative permission in 1933 to create regional (multi-county) libraries. The first regions began to develop when the state began appropriating aid in 1941.³⁸

Direct state assistance to public libraries, which began with very modest amounts in 1941, spurred smaller counties and regions to establish and expand library service. Seventy-six counties received \$1,298.35 each. Some large counties did not bother to apply as the support was so meager. Nevertheless, State Librarian Marjorie Beal believed that state aid helped expand library coverage to a million more people by 1942.³⁹ North Carolina was the first state in the southeast to provide direct aid to local libraries.

Beal undertook a major assessment of public libraries for NCLA six years later. She found that the number of libraries had increased greatly since the early years of the century and that — statistically, at least — public library service now reached 92 percent of the population.⁴⁰ The public in 1948 had access to 1,585,730 books, or .48 books per person and a circulation of two books per capita. There were 93 professional librarians (87 white and 6 black). However, only half of the African American population received public library service. Separate (but hardly equal) black libraries held 144,031 books, or .15 books per African American.⁴¹ Even so, this may have been the best record in the South.⁴²

The history of library services to African Americans in North Carolina has been only tentatively explored to date. The community of the book, so important in the acculturation of immigrant new Americans in northern cities, apparently played a lesser role among Southern blacks.⁴³ The library as a democratic forum for learning and communication hardly existed for African Americans. No library gave them equal access to books. The most vigorous expression of service was in Charlotte, which opened in 1906 what may be the first real black public library in the South.⁴⁴ Durham followed suit in 1916, Asheville in 1927, Wilmington in 1926, and Raleigh in 1935. Blacks established a library in Laurinburg in 1918 which appears to have faded away in the later 1930s.⁴⁵ Durham, Hertford, and Wake were the first North Carolina counties to provide bookmobile service to blacks.⁴⁶ Two public librarians attended the inaugural meeting of the North Carolina Negro Library Association in 1934, and a library school for blacks opened in Durham in 1941.

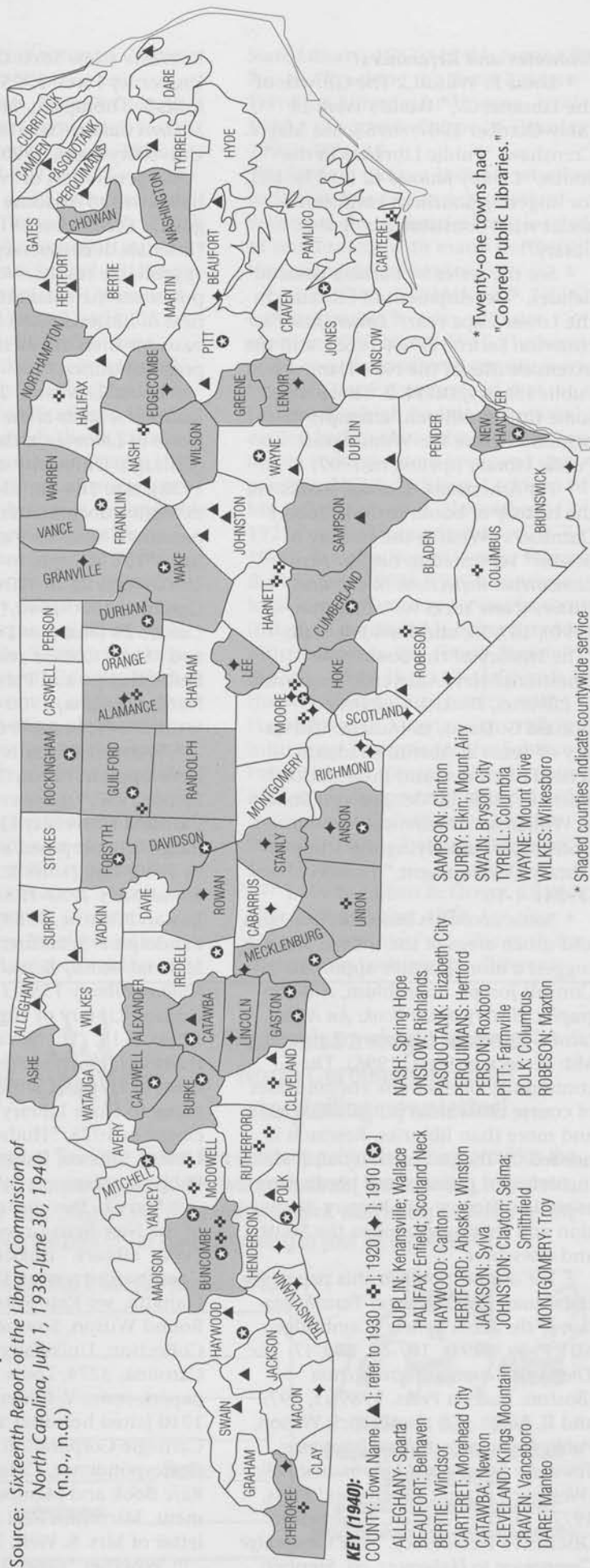
By 1940, eleven of twenty county libraries provided "Service for Negroes," twelve of sixty municipal libraries, and none of the twenty-one association libraries. During World War II, African American soldiers enjoyed some library service at Camp Sutton.⁴⁷ Between 1948, when Beal determinedly focused attention on the problem, and 1950, fifteen counties added Negro library service, and 70 percent of African Americans had access to library service. In the 1950s, there was further, if slow, progress. For example, a black school supervisor started a library in Williamston in 1953 with \$1,000 from the county.⁴⁸ Public libraries began to integrate during the early 1960s.⁴⁹

In 1950, ninety-two counties had library service, covering 95 percent of the state's population. This coverage included nineteen libraries organized as seven regional systems. As much as half the book circulation, however, came from bookmobiles, as North Carolina had more "mobile libraries" than any other state in the union.⁵⁰ In 1960, there were ninety-two public library systems, covering some 97 percent of North Carolina.⁵¹ The extension of branches was now more of a concern. Public libraries possessed 3,679,531 books or .83 per capita, and circulated 12,828,574 books at a cost of \$3,363,000 or \$.74 per person. If this seems modest, it is; but it also represents a circulation of almost three books per resident — three books and the information services and reading encouragement which would not have taken place without public libraries.

By the 1960s, then, there was a reliable if underfunded network of library service throughout the state which included not just main libraries but also branches and bookmobiles.⁵² In theory, practically everyone had access to a public library. The material basis of a library-oriented community of the book was therefore laid in the difficult sixty years from the beginning of the century. Libraries, to return to the vocabulary used by Habermas, provided a possible if not thriving public forum for communication and democratic progress.

MAP 4: Incident of public libraries, 1940.

Source: *Sixteenth Report of the Library Commission of North Carolina, July 1, 1938-June 30, 1940* (n.p., n.d.)



Endnotes and References

¹ Louis R. Wilson, "The Growth of the Libraries . . .," *World's Work* 14 (May-October 1907): 8985. See May V. Crenshaw, "Public Libraries in the South," *Library Journal* 42 (1917): 163, for lingering Southern confusion about what constituted a "public library."

² See the series by Barbara Beeland Rehder, "Development of Libraries in the Lower Cape Fear," *Lower Case Fear Historical Society*, (1964-1966), and the extensive files at the New Hanover Public Library, DB:PL 2. There were some fifteen different attempts to organize before the Wilmington Public Library opened in 1907.

³ For Americans, seminal works on the history of books include Robert Darnton's "What Is the History of Books?" reprinted in his *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 107-35; and David D. Hall, "The History of the Book: New Questions? New Answers?," reprinted in *Libraries, Books & Culture*, ed. Donald G. Davis, Jr. (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1986), 27-38. See also Robert V. Williams, "Theoretical Issues and Constructs Underlying the Study of Library Development," *Libri* 34 (1984): 1-16.

⁴ Some accounts based on northern and urban areas of the United States suggest a more positive appraisal. Consult Joseph Rosenblum, *A Bibliographic History of the Book: An Annotated Guide to the Literature* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1995). The community of the book encompasses of course more than public libraries and more than libraries. Research is needed on the productivity and incidence of printers and booksellers as well as literacy and literary discussion and writing groups in the South and elsewhere.

⁵ For our purposes in this paper, see Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 167-68, 245-47; *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), I, 397, and II, 60-61. Cf. also Patrick Wilson, *Public Knowledge, Private Ignorance: Toward a Library and Information Policy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977); Mark E. Warren, "The Self in Discursive Democracy," *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen

K. White (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 167-200; and John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), esp. 109-21.

⁶ A generation or two of revisionists have tried to disabuse or modify greatly the notion of libraries as "arsenals of democracy" — with appreciable results. Nonetheless, the public service orientation and openness of libraries provide a continuing basis for their democratic as well as practical utility.

⁷ Louis R. Wilson, *The Geography of Reading: A Study of the Distribution and Status of Libraries in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), esp. 184-88, 434-35. For more extensive documentation than can be presented here, see Patrick M. Valentine, "The Struggle to Establish Public Library Service in Wilson, North Carolina, 1900-1940," *Libraries & Culture* 28 (Summer 1993): 285-306; and "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco: Philanthropy and Public Libraries in North Carolina, 1900-1940," *Libraries & Culture* (Spring 1996): 272-98.

⁸ Wendell W. Smiley, "Library Development in North Carolina Before 1930," (Greenville: East Carolina University Library, 1971 [originally proposed as a dissertation in 1930/32]); James S. Brawley, *The Rowan Story 1753-1953* (Salisbury: Rowan Printing, 1953), 289-90; Randolph P. Schaffner, *Good Reading Material, Mostly Bound and New: The Hudson Library 1884-1994* (Highlands: Hudson Library of Highlands, Inc., 1994), 9-18. (There was a separate Hudson Library, started in 1912 in the town of Hudson, which changed its name to Dixie Library in 1916 and closed in 1925. "Hudson Branch Library," files of Caldwell County Public Library.)

⁹ Mary L. Stevenson, "The History of the New Bern-Craven County Public Library," (master's paper, East Carolina University, 1978), 6. On Franklin, see Kate Robinson to Louis Round Wilson, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, 3274, Louis Round Wilson papers, series V, folder 464, 1 March 1910 [cited hereafter as LRW]. Carnegie Corporation Public Library Correspondence, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Department, Microfilm Reel 67, Goldsboro, letter of Mrs. S. Weil, 31 March 1909.

¹⁰ Whether "plain folk" could or

would use a club or subscription library is open to question. I. A. Newby, *Plain Folk in the New South: Social Change and Cultural Persistence 1880-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 419-20, 443; Deanna B. Marcum, *Good Books in a Country Home: The Public Library as Cultural Force in Hagerstown, Maryland, 1878-1920* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 129. Candid reports of the quality of town libraries during this period can be found in Minnie W. Leatherman's reports to the North Carolina Library Commission, LRW, folders 505-13.

¹¹ In 1900 North Carolina supposedly had 57 libraries with 285,000 books, which amounts to .15 books per North Carolinian, but most of these were college libraries and the quality and relevance of the books to the public can be doubted. *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1899-1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), I, 928-31.

¹² Unsigned letter by the librarian, 23 April 1903, Durham County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Correspondence 1897-1911; Leatherman to Wilson, LRW, V, 505, 5 February 1910.

¹³ All library statistics are from the biennial or annual reports of the NCLC, variously titled, starting with *First Biennial Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, 1909-1910* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1910).

¹⁴ See Griggs, "The Memoirs of Mrs. Alfred (Lillian B.) Griggs," Duke University Archives (manuscript, 1940), 52: when requesting money for county service before the County Commissioners, "tears began to roll down my cheeks and I believe the audience was affected enough to have given us the \$600" instead of the \$400 library trustees had asked for.

¹⁵ Raleigh had ten libraries, six of them college or academy, three controlled by the state government, one public.

¹⁶ Charlotte also had an African American public library (1906) and a Y.M.C.A. library (n.d.).

¹⁷ Fayetteville, too, had a tradition of library service in the nineteenth century. See "Fay-Library" files at Cumberland County Public Library. In January 1933 it became a free library and in December opened to county residents.

¹⁸ A club library opened in 1904 was supposedly free of charge to the

public after 1907. (Greenville) *Daily Reflector*, 17 October 1930 and 11 February 1950. But compare LRW, V, 514, Monthly Report of the Secretary, June 10-July 10 (1910): "This little library is entirely under the control of three book clubs, consisting of 20 members each and seems to be patronized almost exclusively by the members." See also East Carolina University, Joyner Library Manuscripts, 150.1 and 150.6, End of the Century Book Club papers. Thirty-one of forty-eight club meetings between October 1902 and October 1906 were devoted to the library. The city did not assume control from the Woman's Club until 1928.

¹⁹ See Valentine, "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco," n. 93.

²⁰ Dates given are those listed in *First Biennial Report ... 1909-1910*. Several libraries did not send in statistics, while Ledger with a population of 52 claimed 12,000 books. These statistics do not include libraries which had ceased operating by 1909 or sent in no report, such as Wilson, Kinston, and Lincolnton. The Brevard Street ("Colored") Library in Charlotte was not listed until *Second Biennial Report*.

²¹ Perhaps the South's greatest librarian, Wilson assumed direction of the University of North Carolina library in 1901, taught the first courses in librarianship in North Carolina in 1910, started the state's second library school in 1931, was dean of the Graduate Library School at Chicago, served as president of the American Library Association in 1935-36, and finally retired full of honors in 1959. (The first library school was at North Carolina Normal and Industrial College in Greensboro.)

²² See North Carolina Department of Archives and History [cited hereafter as NCDAH], NCLA Archives, 1, 1-8, 67-69, and "The North Carolina Library Association, Organized May, 1904," (booklet, n.d. [1909 or 1910], bound at p. 31); Louis R. Wilson, "The North Carolina Library Association, 1904-1909," *North Carolina Libraries* 13 (November 1954): 2-7. A graduate of Drexel College, Miss Petty was probably the first professional librarian in the state. She was NCLC Chairman from 1918 to 1921 and then its (paid) Assistant Secretary and Director until 1933.

²³ Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-*

1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), and "Women and Libraries," *Libraries, Books & Culture*, 400-405; James V. Carmichael, Jr., "Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915," *ibid.*, 377-399, and "Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South ..." in *Women's Work: Vision and Change in Librarianship* (University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science Occasional Paper 196/197, 1994), 27-104. Cf., Cheryl Ann Karr, "A Preliminary Examination of the Involvement of Women's Clubs in the Establishment of Selected Public Libraries in Georgia, 1896-1920," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1992). The crucial role of women in creating public libraries is indisputable in Aberdeen, Albemarle, Andrews, Clayton, Davidson County, Durham, Edenton, Goldsboro, High Point, Johnston County, Kinston, Maxton, Mooresville, Morganton, Randolph County, Reidsville, Salisbury, Saluda, Swan Quarter, Tyrrell County, Washington, and Wilson. In addition, the role of women is often obscured by a perceived need to have a man negotiate for them with public and private authorities.

²⁴ The LRW papers indicate that there was a fair amount of acrimony, glossed over in public, between the NCLC and the Federation. See also Thornton W. Mitchell, *The State Library and Library Development in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of

State Library, 1983), 19-24; Joanne E. Passet, "Reaching the Rural Readers: Traveling Libraries in America, 1892-1920," *Libraries & Culture* 26 (Winter 1991): 100-118.

²⁵ Sanford did not indicate whether its library was free or subscription. Several of these libraries were located in small towns with many northern tourists, such as Niagara.

²⁶ Quotation, NCDAH, 62.9, NCLC Administrative Section, minutes, meeting of 17 March 1921. Durham and Greensboro offered county service by 1916, but Palmer argued that Charlotte, which had done so even earlier, had made a mistake in acting before the legislature approved the practice. NCLA Archives, "Address of Mr. E. P. Wharton ... November 11, 1921," and ensuing discussion, 2, 6, 18-23. See also *North Carolina Library Bulletin* 8/5 (1931), 79. The uncertain legal status of county service in some instances precluded it being listed in official records. Cf., *Fourth Biennial Report ... 1915-1916*, 17. California led the way with county service, with Hagerstown in Maryland providing an influential example for the South. Peter Thomas Conmy, "The Centennial of Tax Supported Public Libraries in California," *California Librarian* (October 1978), 7-15; and Marcum, *Good Books*.

²⁷ LRW to Lillian B. Griggs, LRW, V, 516, 25 September 1928. See also Griggs, "Memoirs," 52. The push for higher standards was far different

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from earlier years when just the creation of a library was the rallying cry. See for instance, J. P. Breedlove's opening address at the eighth NCLA meeting (Washington, N.C., 5 November 1913): "Every town and village of North Carolina can have a public library ... even though the library be small and its growth slow." NCLA Archives, 1, 39. Breedlove was the Trinity College librarian and treasurer of NCLA.

²⁸ California spent \$1.08 per person and Massachusetts \$0.85. Even in 1932 the president of the Winston-Salem Board of Trustees considered county contributions merely a way of reducing city appropriations. Tommie Dora Barker, American Library Association Library Extension Board, Regional Field Agent for the South, Field Notes, 15-21 November 1932 [cited hereafter as ALA Field Notes; I am indebted to Dr. James V. Carmichael, Jr., for copies of these Notes]. Cf. Paul S. Ballance, comp., *The First Fifty Years of Public Library Service in Winston-Salem 1906-1956* (Winston-Salem: Public Library of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, 1956?), 26-27.

²⁹ Salem had 42,000 inhabitants, the seven North Carolina cities 222,607. Wilson's article was first printed in the University newsletter and in one form or another was widely disseminated and discussed. For Wilson's use of Salem and comparative statistics, see Robert Sidney Martin, "Louis Round Wilson's Geography of Reading: A Inquiry into Its Origins, Development, and Impact," *Libraries, Books & Culture*, 425-44, esp. 427-28.

³⁰ Quotation, Griggs to Mrs. R. L. Carr, 25 September 1930, Griggs papers, Duke University Special Collections. See also Helen Marjorie Beal, "The Citizens Library Movement," typescript, 6 March 1936, and letters by Graham in NCLC Archives, 62.13, Box 1; William Eury, "The Citizens' Library Movement in North Carolina," (bachelor's thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1951); William S. Powell, "Citizens' Library Movement in North Carolina," *North Carolina Libraries* 13 (November 1954): 33-39; Warren Ashby, *Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1980), 66-68; Griggs to Anne Pierce, 516, 25 October 1929, and Griggs to Wilson, 517, 1 April 1930, LRW, V.

³¹ Gov. O. Max Gardner, "The

Significance of the Citizens' Library Movement," (Chapel Hill?: North Carolina Library Association, 1929). Governor Clyde R. Hoey, at a CLM meeting in Charlotte, 26 March 1938, declared "I believe the extension of adequate library facilities into the rural communities will do much toward advancing the interests of North Carolina." Cited, *Fifteenth Report of the North Carolina Library Commission*, 9.

³² One, in Oteen, was a Veteran's Hospital Library. Only twelve counties contributed as much as \$1,000 annually to libraries in 1936. Floyd W. Price, Jr., "A History of the Northampton Library, Northampton County, N. C., 1934-1966," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1981), 12; Richard H. Thornton, *The Richard H. Thornton Library* (Oxford: Richard H. Thornton Library, 1975), 15-19. The CLM did have a direct impact on the Mebane gift in Rockingham County.

³³ On social services in the South, see William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Numan V. Bartley, *The New South 1945-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); and Dewey Grantham, *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994). The best general state history is William S. Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

³⁴ ALA-Field Notes, 23-29 September 1932; Frank Graham to Wilson, 15 July 1930, LRW, IV, 320. Upon his return, Wilson worked strenuously against a proposed 10% salary cut. As Griggs wrote to Beal, "Librarians did not enjoy high salaries ... during prosperous days and I think to reduce them now would be a mistake." Griggs to Beal, 24 January 1931, Griggs papers; see also Wilson to Griggs, 19 January 1931; Griggs to Wilson, 21 January 1931.

³⁵ Quotation, Elizabeth H. Hughey, "Public Libraries in North Carolina," *North Carolina Libraries* 13 (November 1954): 15. James V. Carmichael, Jr., "North Carolina Libraries Face the Depression: A Regional Field Agent and the 'Bell Cow' State, 1930-36,"

ibid., 50 (Spring 1992), 35-40. Federal aid to North Carolina in 1940-41 amounted to \$790,810, the seventh highest total in the United States. Edward Barrett Stanford, *Library Extension Under the WPA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 62, Table 6. See also Richard Sylla, "Long-Term Trends in State and Local Finance: Sources and Uses of Funds in North Carolina, 1800-1977," in Stanley Engerman and Robert C. Gallman, eds., *Long-Term Factors in American Economic Growth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 827 and 837.

³⁶ "Sixteenth Report of the North Carolina Library Commission, July 1, 1938-June 30, 1940," 13-14.

³⁷ The true percentage was smaller as blacks had little or no access in most counties. In addition, as a result of Supreme Court rulings that "A public library is not a necessary expense" and the failure of a local library tax levy, the Charlotte Public Library closed from 30 June 1939 to 1940. Patricia Ryckman, *Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County: A Century of Service* (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1989), 15-16; Mitchell, *State Library*, 57.

³⁸ The first regional systems were B.H.M. (Beaufort, Hyde, and Martin counties) and Nantahala (Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties). Chatham, Person, and Orange counties shared a librarian, as did Duplin, Onslow, and Sampson counties, but each county had its own board and autonomy.

³⁹ "Seventeenth Report ... 1942," 6-7.

⁴⁰ Helen Marjorie Beal, ed., "Libraries in North Carolina: A Survey, 1946-1947," (Raleigh: NCLA, 1948).

⁴¹ Beal fought successfully for greater resources for black North Carolinians. She added Mollie Huston Lee, who was librarian of the Richard B. Harrison Library in Raleigh and had worked part time for the State Library for years, to her staff in 1946 as Negro Supervisor of Rural Libraries.

⁴² The capitals of the neighboring states of Virginia and South Carolina, for instance, did not open libraries until 1924, at least in part because of fear of black involvement. Carolyn H. Leatherman, "Richmond Considers a Free Public Library," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 96 (April 1988), 181-92; Dorothy D. Wilson, "The History of Richland County

Public Library," (typescript, 1967, "RCPL-misc." file at Richland County Public Library). Atlanta ignored a Carnegie grant for a black branch and did not have library service for African Americans until 1921; Jacksonville, on the other hand, attempted to establish a truly separate but equal library. On the relative status of black education in North Carolina versus other Southern states, see James N. Padgett, "From Slavery to Prominence in North Carolina," *Journal of Negro History* XXII, (October 1937): 445-46, 457.

⁴³ Libraries receive little or no attention in the surveys analyzed by John R. Larkins, in *Patterns of Leadership Among Negroes in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Irving-Swain Press, n.d. [1959]); or, in Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). See also John R. Larkins, "The Negro Population of North Carolina, Social and Economic," *Special Bulletin* Number 23 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, 1944). Some blacks, however, borrowed library cards from whites: Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1945 ed.), 267-73; Louise J. Moses, in E. J. Josey, ed., *Black Librarian in America* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1974), 140. On European American immigrants, see Rosemary Ruhig DuMont, *Reform and Reaction: The Big City Public Library in American Life* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 98-104, 136-37; and Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1972), 28-29, 288-94. The most comprehensive study is Plummer Alston Jones, "American Public Library Service to the Immigrant Community: 1876-1948 ..." (Ph.D. diss. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991).

⁴⁴ Memphis had a branch for blacks in a "colored normal school" in 1904 and Galveston in January 1905 had a branch in a high school but "Charlotte, N. C. is the first and only city to build a library for Negroes with its own funds." William F. Yust, "What of the Black and Yellow Races?" *Bulletin of the American Library Association* (July 1913), 159-67, quotation 162; and Eliza A. Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 20-22, 28. See also Tommie Dora Barker, *Libraries of the South: A Report on*

Developments 1930-1935 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1936), 50. For documentation on Durham, Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Davidson County, see Valentine, "Steel, Cotton and Tobacco," n. 37-40, 53, 57, 66-70, 82-84, 142, 145, and 148.

⁴⁵ It may have been operated by the Colored Civic League. *Laurinburg Exchange* (14 March 1918). Citation courtesy of Robert Busko.

⁴⁶ Whites in Scotland County apparently did not have a public library until August 1941. See also Nollie H. Lee, "Development of Negro Libraries in North Carolina," *North Carolina Libraries* 3 (May 1944): 3; and Doretta D. Anderson, "A History of Public Library Service to Blacks in Wilson, North Carolina," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), 17-19.

⁴⁷ Kathryn M. Penn, Reading Interests of Soldiers," *North Carolina Libraries* 3 (May 1944): 12.

⁴⁸ "Mary S. Gray Library a favorite of W'mston Children," (Williamston) *Enterprise*, 22 May 1984. See also Williamston Library files in the

Martin Memorial Library; and Francis M. Manning and W. H. Booker, *Martin County History* (Williamston: Enterprise Publishing, 1977), I, 280.

⁴⁹ Capus M. Waynick, et al., ed., *North Carolina and the Negro* (Raleigh: North Carolina Mayors' Co-operating Committee, 1964), *passim*. See also A. P. Marshall, "Service to Afro-Americans," *A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada*, ed. Sidney L. Jackson et al. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), 72-75; Eric Moon and Karl Nyren, *Library Issues: The Sixties* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 117-50.

⁵⁰ "Twenty-Third Report ... 1954," 24.

⁵¹ *Second Biennial Report of the North Carolina State Library*, July 1, 1958-June 30, 1960. These statistics are precise, if not necessarily accurate. For instance, Ashe, counted earlier as a county-wide library, is mentioned as still struggling to establish such service in 1959.

⁵² On funding, see for example the lead editorial "Shortchanging the Libraries," *Twin City Sentinel*, April 20 1967.

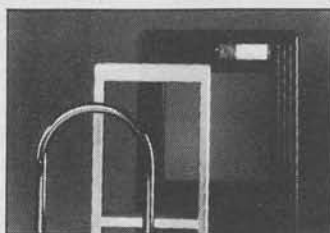
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