Foreword

"Many success stories in library automation convey the impression that the installation of electronic equipment is an end in itself," states William Matthews in the *JOURNAL OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION* March 1979 Editorial. Often, stories of success in library automation fail to convey how we want automation to affect libraries and librarians or what the overall automation agenda is for libraries today or the future.

Three of the four articles in this issue of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* concern the topic of automation. The first two articles were presented as speeches during a symposium sponsored by the North Carolina Library Association, Resources and Technical Services Section, held at the Sheraton, Southern Pines, N.C., on April 9 and 10, 1981. That program focused on sharing practical procedures for planning and implementing automation projects and presented future possibilities for networking and resource sharing in North Carolina and the Southeast. Richard Boss focuses on this theme, discussing the overall trends in the turnkey system market by providing an overview of the major considerations necessary in planning and implementing a turnkey system. He concludes with a description of the elements common to an analysis of retrospective conversion technology.

Susan Epstein emphasizes that systems fail because of the lack of: 1) planning and 2) communication to staff. Epstein also emphasizes acquiring a system.

The article by Benjamin F. Speller describes management problems that have occurred as a result of unstable economic conditions nationally and verifies through survey research that these conditions hold equally true for both small and medium-sized libraries in North Carolina and are comparable to libraries nationally. Quality management has become urgent in view of the rapid expansion and continuous changes in knowledge, communications, technology and the economy.

The fourth article, by Mae Holt, examines the effects of inflation, library policies, recent collection evaluations and user studies, use of serials and resource sharing.

Careful and continuing examination of the employment of computer technology as a means of facilitating the availability of existing information is an essential activity for all library/information professionals. We must be sure that the use of automation enhances programs and services in a manner which will provide maximum benefits for all present and future users.

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