
Foreword

Robert Russell, Guest Editor

The unifying element of the articles in this issue is that all touch on some aspect of public library service. Beyond that, the subject matter is as varied as the challenges facing North Carolina public librarians as we prepare to enter a new decade.

One of the most significant recent trends in public librarianship is the proliferation of videotape collections in public libraries. Catherine Moore describes one library's approach to instituting video services, and then offers a comprehensive list of considerations for any library planning to initiate a videotape collection. A list of sources for various types of information and materials, a bibliography of videotapes of particular interest to North Carolina libraries, and a sample videotape user survey round out this article.

Two articles deal with very different aspects of public library construction. It is unfortunate but true that once the battle to build a new library is won and construction is completed, we often initiate service from a new facility with no significant increase in the operating budget which supported service in the old building. Robert Burgin and Melanie Collins examine the increases in circulation (and other performance measures) which result from the opening of a new main library. This information can be an invaluable aid to the library director or board engaged in planning and budget negotiations.


Another crucial issue in public library construction is the selection of a site for a new branch library. Carol Myers, working in conjunction with other members of the Public Library Development Committee, began her research with the intention of developing a model for selecting branch library locations. She reached the conclusion that each local situation is so different that the goal of developing a model applicable to all situations is unattainable. However, the committee's research did produce an extensive annotated bibliography which will be of use to any library planning new branch facilities.

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The combination of new services, new technologies, and the difficulty of obtaining new personnel has made public library directors more aware of the importance of staff development. During the past few years, the North Carolina Public Library Staff Development Program has played a major role in staff development efforts throughout the state. Duncan Smith, Staff Development Program Coordinator, examines staff development by focusing on the attitudes of library administrators and the expectations of library staff members.

Library service to children is the subject of two articles in this issue. Writing from the perspective of a public school librarian, Linda Proseus studies the relationship between reading achievement and the use of the public library by elementary school students. And Barbara Freedman describes the experience of her library system in developing guidelines for planning, conducting, and evaluating children's programs.

Although the trend in public library governance has been away from governing boards of trustees, replacing them with advisory boards, library boards continue to play a crucial role in public library development in the state. Terri Union, who is vice chair/chair-elect of the Trustee Section of the North Carolina Library Association, offers her view of the role of library boards in the political process.

The articles in this issue will be of primary interest to public librarians, or to anyone responsible for planning or evaluating public library services. Much of the information should prove useful to other types of librarians as well. It is our hope that these articles will also stimulate thinking and further research into some of the issues examined. 

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