

Report from the President

As I have indicated before in this column, I sincerely feel that we sometimes never get around to adequately handling public relations. Oscar Wilde once said, "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." As the General Assembly prepares to convene in January, I think that each of us should take time to make contact with our legislators, whether they are veterans or newcomers. Unfortunately, we have not been very vocal in the past, and as a result, we often are bypassed when it comes to funding or legislation.

Since election time, many librarians in the state have already made personal contact or have written their legislators congratulating them on their election and offering their services should they need information on libraries in carrying out their responsibilities. There are several things that you need to keep in mind when you make these contacts in order that they will be to your advantage.

As a starter, you should be individual. Never send a carbon copy or a multipli-produced letter to your legislator if you expect him or her to give it individual attention. Individual attention from a legislator deserves individual attention from the constituent. This way they will know that you are not merely passing on some-

thing that was given to you but are stating your own original ideas.

As you can imagine, legislators are literally swamped with thousands of pieces of correspondence. Therefore, keep it brief. They like to receive mail from their constituents, but if the letter runs over one page, due to the press of time, they may set it aside to read later and never get



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around to a review. Information or data supporting your ideas should be included as an attachment rather than as a part of the letter.

It is important to be positive. Simply sending a letter asking a legislator to vote for or against a bill is not enough. He wants to know your reasons. Tell him in your own words why you think proposed legislation is good or bad. Most legislators try to make a judgment on the basis of the best information they have. Your thought or idea might be a new one or a new way of expressing an idea and that could be the very one that appeals to him.

Do not continually write your legislator about many items of legislation. The shotgun approach does not usually work. Write only about matters that have your deep or serious concern. Zero in on the most important issues.

Too often we are quick to criticize a particular vote that we disagree with but never consider those that go along with our thinking. When your legislator casts a good vote in your opinion, or when he makes a public statement which you believe to be good, drop him a note and thank him for his concern or his interest. I read someplace that most legislators receive letters of condemnation at a ratio of better than ten to one over those of commendation. All of us know how important it is to get a pat on the back occasionally. Remember to say thank you.

Although this is only one area with which you should be concerned, this is certainly an excellent place to start. Watch for notices that have to do with pending legislation involving libraries and immediately let your legislators know your feelings and why.

Another issue of great concern has to do with the possible reorganization of the North Carolina Library Association. A number of the membership have come to me suggesting that we might better meet their needs if we were organized around interest areas rather than by types of libraries. Ohio and Florida are examples

of state organizations that have changed to this approach. Due to these concerns I have appointed an *ad hoc* committee to investigate and make recommendations concerning reorganization. I am not personally convinced that this is necessarily the way to go, but I do feel it important to see what the advantages and disadvantages of such an arrangement might be. I asked section chairmen to suggest names of persons in their sections who would be willing to do research in this area.

The membership of this important committee is now complete. G. John Heyer, representing the Junior Members Roundtable, has agreed to chair the group. If you have strong feelings one way or the other, the committee would very much like to hear from you. His address is Humanities Division, L. R. Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514. You might contact him or your representative on the committee. Following are the other members of the committee: Richard B. Meldrom (Children's Services); Barbara Baker (Junior Colleges); Miriam G. Ricks (NCASL); David Larson (Public Libraries); Mrs. A. D. Tate, Jr. (Trustees); Betty I. Young (Colleges and Universities); and W. Robert Pollard (Resources and Technical Services). Be a part of this study. Although you would ultimately vote yourself on any changes should they be recommended, now is the time to be heard so you can be in this issue from the beginning.

I have recently received preliminary information concerning state library associations from the Southeastern States Cooperative Library Survey. As you know, there are ten states in the Southeastern Library Association. Some of the data might be of interest to you. As an example, six of the associations employ an executive secretary. Sections or divisions range from a low of four in Alabama to a high of eight in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. The average number of standing committees is eleven. NCLA has fourteen with several *ad hoc* committees. Although they

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all have committees dealing with legislative matters and membership, North Carolina is the only state with a Grievance Committee. Five of the associations meet annually.

North Carolina has the highest membership of any of the other state associations. This sounds good, but we only have 54% of our potential membership. The largest percentage of the membership in NCLA is made up of school librarians/media coordinators, while trustees and Friends are in the majority in Alabama. North Carolina has the highest percentage of school people belonging to the state association. We also have the largest conference attendance.

Individual membership dues are based on a sliding scale, determined by salary in three of the states. Dues range from a

high of \$10.00 to \$4.00, with an average of \$7.00. Ours as you know is \$5.00 a year or \$10.00 for the biennium. Three of the associations — Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina — award one or more scholarships.

I feel that the major reason for our being number one in several of the categories is due to our active membership. Please continue being involved. Each issue of *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* carries a directory of officers and committee chairmen with their addresses. If you want to be a part of the important work of your association, contact these people and offer your services. Together we can become number one in all areas of concern. I continue to solicit your support. My sincere thanks goes out to you for your important contributions.

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prominent; superior, esp. in excellence.

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