

A Reprieve

By rumor or by fact most all of us know by now that this journal has indeed fallen upon hard times. Until approximately a year ago *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* had received its financial support through the generosity of Joseph Ruzicka, library book binder in Greensboro. For nearly thirty years, since February 1942, Mr. Ruzicka and his family paid all the costs of production. They did this for several reasons. It was good business, but moreover they were generous and convinced of the need for such an organ as this in our state and in our sister states of Virginia and South Carolina. By 1971 inflation and other factors had so increased production costs that the Ruzicka Bindery felt it necessary to withdraw its support, and so for *NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES* an era came to an end. Thirty years is a long time.

When the sad news came it carried with it the surprise of a gunshot in the dark. Whereas for thirty years there had been little need to concern ourselves with production costs that ran between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per issue, we were now faced with a number of major decisions, among which was the issue of the journal itself. On December 10, 1971, the Executive Board of NCLA voted to discontinue publication temporarily or possibly permanently, or at least until a study could be made of financial arrangements which might allow publication to continue. First thoughts seem to have turned toward making the journal self-sustaining through advertising revenues, but none among us or at least among those who came forward with an offer to help had any experience in selling advertising. Our membership owes a lasting debt of gratitude to Mell Busbin who resigned with the last issue and to all those before him who have accepted the thankless task of keeping the journal alive

since 1942. Mr. Busbin began the initial effort in soliciting advertising which might make the difference in the survival of this journal. Last February the journal's Editorial Board met in Chapel Hill in its attempt to decide what might be done to ameliorate our situation. Those attending the meeting reflected strong sentiment filtering up to them from the membership which said that the Association had a responsibility to stimulate professional interest among its members and to keep them informed of activities related to the profession on a state level. The Editorial Board recommended several things for the journal, among which were:

1. That NCLA support it out of Association funds for the next one and one-half years at least, utilizing moneys in savings if necessary;
2. That the Association find a new editor and a business manager immediately;
3. That a new Editorial Board be created; and
4. That solicitation and use of advertisements to help underwrite production costs and mailing be continued.

"You can count on it," Samuel Johnson is quoted as saying, "when a man knows he is about to hang in a fortnight, it collects his mind wonderfully." So it was that the Executive Board of the Association began to move expeditiously at its spring meeting in Greenville on April 15. The Board agreed to subsidize the journal for the recommended period, a new editor was chosen, a new editorial board has been created, and authorization has been given to sell advertising space. As this goes to press, a newly-appointed business manager

in Charlotte is setting machinery in motion which we hope will produce the necessary revenues. How much will we need? Approximately \$1,000 to \$6,000 annually. Why will we need this much? Because there are many things that need to be done with the journal to improve it and to make it more responsive to the needs of our profession within the state.

Economies will be sought wherever possible. Many parts of the journal will become standardized beginning with the present number. New printing plates and masters for each issue are expenses which can be eliminated through the use of a standard cover such as that binding the present issue.

No longer will the journal print a list of the NCLA membership. The Editorial Board views this as an expense which should not be borne by the journal unless of course some financial arrangement can be effected, which would cover the cost of printing and distributing the membership list. The Board invites response to this statement. How valuable is the membership list to our readers anyway?

Because of features which will begin appearing in the journal within the next few issues, periodicity and timeliness must be new concerns to which the Executive Board will devote its attention. We are in fact declaring, not naively we hope, that the journal will be mailed on the last day of the month which ends each calendar quarter. All copy must be in the hands of the Editorial Board by no later than 45 days prior to the distribution date.

At some point it is hoped the journal can create enough revenue to pay not only for itself but to establish scholarships in each of the library schools in North Carolina and to pay for manuscripts which it uses. Each of the members of the Editorial Board needs the assistance of every member of NCLA in making the journal into more than it could be in years past. For all practical purposes the journal can be considered to be bankrupt, but this is a

condition which must not be allowed to continue for if it does, all of our good intentions will have been in vain eighteen months from now. The Editorial Board solicits your ideas, your criticisms, your financial contributions, and copy which might be used in forthcoming issues.

In the way of innovation and to create more income, the journal will begin to serve as a clearinghouse for employment within the next six months. The associate editor is developing a program whereby individuals as well as libraries may purchase advertising space in a classified section which will appear at two strategic times of the year as far as employment opportunities are concerned. If the journal is going to sell such a service, it must be timely so that classified advertisements receive three months advance visibility at least.

We intend also to indulge in controversy. Time and again we hear reports that our Association is unresponsive to younger members, that it is composed of an old guard, and that it is lily white. Experience may bear this out to a degree, we dare not say just now. Whatever the case, we intend to see that all elements of librarianship in North Carolina are represented in the pages of this journal.

Appropriate remarks for closing this piece fail us just presently. From somewhere out of the past we seem to hear echoes about fools rushing in, and we know it to be all too true. NCLA has granted the journal a reprieve, albeit a qualified one; and so our daring spirit here at the beginning of a time in which we are trying to make it on our own is like the man whose x-rays were confused with those of someone with a terminal illness and a year and a half to live. While he did not live recklessly he learned for the first time in his life to live without really caring. He had nothing more to lose. Perhaps it is not too strange after all that he became more of a success than anyone had ever dreamed.

THE EDITOR