

# THE NEXT STEP FOR NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES: A LIBRARIES SERVICES NETWORK

*Summary of The Report of A Feasibility Study  
of The North Carolina Libraries Services Network*

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Study of the Feasibility of a Libraries Services Network for North Carolina finds that North Carolina is only partially prepared to take maximum advantage of the knowledge explosion which is taking place in the United States. Although the state has a great many libraries, and some very eminent ones, its library resources are still largely unrelated in a systematic way, thus making it impossible for the information needs of the citizens of North Carolina to be met adequately.

## Suggestions for Improvement

Over the years, a variety of suggestions have been made to meet those needs more satisfactorily. Dr. Robert B. Downs' 1965 study of North Carolina's library resources and needs recognized "that all libraries—public, school, college, university, state, special—should be viewed as a whole and fitted into a common pattern. Weaknesses in any one of the links is harmful to the rest."

Looking at the rising needs of college libraries in 1968, the State Board of Higher Education saw the possibility of extending academic cooperation.

But the problem of organizing and funding such an extension remained unsolved. The State Library, the State Board of Education, the North Carolina Library Association and the State Board of Higher Education joined together in the search for statewide cooperation through the vehicle of the Feasibility Study here summarized.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This feasibility study was conducted under the joint sponsorship of the North Carolina State Library, the State Board of Education, the State Board of Higher Education, and the North Carolina Library Association. Notice has been received as this goes to press that the Governor and the Advisory Budget Commission included the State Library's request for funds to implement the Library Services Network in the "B" Budget for 1971-73. The amount requested and recommended for this purpose was \$273,030.

The summary report printed here and the more-detailed report are available upon request from the Office of the State Librarian, Raleigh, North Carolina.

## North Carolina Has a History of Cooperation

Interlibrary cooperation to link individual libraries for improved services began early in North Carolina. The North Carolina Union Catalog was begun by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University in the 1930's as a small cooperative project, and public libraries have joined in a number of ways since 1941.

In 1957, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill established the Interlibrary Service Center. The availability in 1968 of funds under Title III of the national Library Services and Construction Act strengthened the Service Center immensely. A rapid communications system linking the State Library and the libraries of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University at Raleigh, and Duke University was set up to supply bibliographic information at no cost to the user to over 100 libraries in the state.

By 1968, the State Library had assumed leadership in the development of a coordinated system of library service for the entire state, and there was ample evidence throughout the state of enthusiastic support of such a system by librarians.

The North Carolina Libraries Services Network came officially into being on August 13, 1970, when the State Library Board accepted the concept of the Network and announced its expansion as first priority in its "B" Budget for the 1971-73 biennium. The problem is thus not to establish the Network, but to develop it further.

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Study recommends recognition of the North Carolina Libraries Services Network and its expansion to link all information sources in the state with potential users anywhere in the state, thus finally achieving a coordinated statewide library service system.

To that end, the Study makes the following major recommendations:

- that the 1971 General Assembly declare development of the North Carolina Libraries Services Network to be a state priority
- that the 1971 General Assembly appropriate as a minimum for the development of the Network the full amount requested in Item 1.a of the 1971-73 "B" Budget of the State Library (\$273,030)
- that, at least during the initial stage of its development, the Network be considered a function of the State institutions or agencies to circumvent their responsibilities to establish, maintain, and support adequately on-site collections and materials.

The Network, at least during the initial period of development, should be regarded as flexible in both organization and operation, as an experiment, permitting a variety of methods and combinations of methods of improving library services in North Carolina to be tried.

(Continued on Page 24)

## A LIBRARIES SERVICES NETWORK

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The library Network concept is still in the process of development in the United States; thus any estimates of the costs of the North Carolina Network would be of limited value at this time. The Network's eventual contribution to the state will have to be judged on the basis of its performance. But evidence indicates that substantial long-range savings can be anticipated as more effective use is made of present and future library staffs and holdings and as unnecessary duplication of resources and services is eliminated.

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This Study was made possible by a grant from the Council on Library Resources, Incorporated, Washington, D. C., and funds from the North Carolina State Library.

In the conduct of the Study and the preparation of the Report, the Director was guided by an Executive Committee representing the sponsors, composed of the following:

Charlesanna Fox, County Librarian, Randolph Public Library,  
North Carolina Library Association representative

Frank Justice, Assistant Budget Officer, State of North Carolina  
Vera Melton, Coordinator of Library Services, Department of Community Colleges

Philip S. Ogilvie, State Librarian

Jerrold Orne, University Librarian, University of North Carolina  
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Elaine von Oesen, Assistant State Librarian

Cameron West, Director, State Board of Higher Education

Hilda A. Highfill, Research Associate, State Board of Higher Education

Members of the Advisory Committee who assisted at numerous stages of the Study are as follows:

Darlene L. Ball, Manager, Technical Services, Burlington Industries  
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