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EDITOR

## *Future Reference*

PHILIP S. OGILVIE,

*State Librarian of North Carolina*

Being a keynote speaker I know I should have come here with a very formal speech full of all kinds of statistics, many syllabled words and complicated sentences that would really and truly leave something for posterity, but I don't want to speak formally. Besides that I was told before I came in that we were going to tape this for posterity. Then, in the next breath, I heard that one reason we are taping it is for George Linder who couldn't be here today. What kind of inspiration is there when an old man like him can be identified as part of posterity?

What I want to talk about here is the future of reference in an informal but serious way because reference is the future of libraries. In other words I'm turning it around. You are aware, as am I, of the trends throughout not only North Carolina but the nation. Circulation in many places has leveled off. In some places it is making only small progress so far as increased numbers in spite of the fact that more and more of the population can read on a higher level. It's because of the fact that television

and the paperback racks in stores have become the sources for many of their entertainment and recreational reading.

There was a time when the average public library in North Carolina had as its major concern the distribution and circulation of recreational materials. The best sellers, the mysteries, the light romances, etc., were the materials that really circulated. They brought many people into the library. It was customary to see people come in with an armload of books and cause for concern if they didn't go out with an arm full of books. But, there have been some changes made. Since World War II, and particularly since the 60's, you've seen more and more public libraries joining the academic and special libraries as informational libraries. I say "informational" because "reference" has many connotations and what we're talking about here is information. Provision of information is the thing that has grown more and more to be public library business. And, who needs that information? Anybody who has a use for it. You have the businessman who comes in seeking population

data. You have college and high school students coming in using the public library for reference. You have your community college and technical institute people who go to school on a part-time basis 30-40 miles from your library. They attend a class and return immediately to your community to go back to a job. Then, they seek out your library late in the afternoon, or early in the evening, or maybe the subsequent morning and ask you to help them with their work, which is as it should be. The tax-supported public library is there to serve anybody who needs the help.

The point is that the public library is in the information business in a very real sense, but not everyone understands that fact. I spent the whole day yesterday discussing with top people in North Carolina government a draft report for planning for managerial and technical assistance to business, commerce and industry in North Carolina. The first meeting of that group took place in March. So far as I know no public library and no one at the State Library even knew that meeting took place. It was called, took place, a lot of discussion went on, and only when it was all over did Bill Lowe from the North Carolina State University staff call and ask why the State Library was not represented. Then, two or three days later Darlene Ball, Information Specialist at Burlington Industries here at Greensboro, called and asked the same question. In the meanwhile we called the State Planning Division of the Administration Department of State Government and asked why we were not involved. They seemed as surprised as we that we had been overlooked. And yet this is not new. Anyone who has been around the State Library knows how often libraries of all kinds get overlooked. The people involved here are people much involved in enticing industry into this state and in the general development of the entire state. They seek to make North Carolina move forward by providing to industry that may be enticed into this state help with information and by providing to industry already here programs to help their people grow on the job.

Here again we are talking of community colleges. They are involved along with libraries because, as you know, wherever one can get 10 people together for a kind of training in managerial development or whatever, the community college program will provide a course and will use part-time people from the industry itself to give this course. Then, local libraries assist both faculty and students which is good. It's the kind of service we want. It's teamwork that is the key to North Carolina's future. The first resource that the local man would turn to or should turn to for information is the nearest library. For example, if you were running a small operation up in my old county of Hertford with perhaps 60 employees, and you recognized a void in their background — something they need to help them understand the nature of your work and theirs a little better — it would seem to me the natural thing to seek out the local public library and through that library seek information from elsewhere in the state about programs to help develop staff, about scientific and technical information to help you improve techniques of production, etc. This information potential exists in all 100 counties. There certainly should have been an awareness of it. And yet, libraries were overlooked.

I know that I sound like I'm finding fault, but what I'm trying to do is point out to you that somehow our image as the primary information resource in the state and county has not gone across to enough people even to this day. Someone asked me only recently how much our information network is really used. He grew up in eastern North Carolina, familiar with libraries. His mother was a part of the Woman's Club that sponsored the library and he knew that library and how it was used. As a child he went hand in his mother's hand to borrow children's books and she went to borrow books, largely fiction, that were available for her. To him this was what a library meant. It was a cultural asset in the community — cultural in the tea and mink senses of the word. When people thought

of financing it, they thought of financing a community luxury because the things of culture, particularly when money is tight, are thought of by too many of those people who control the money as luxury items. They don't see it as a necessary information source in the local community, but the future of libraries now depends very much upon more people seeing the library as that link between the known and the unknown as that means of getting to resources, as that location of the second chance for the high school dropout or for the man who has an outdated skill, whom automation has put on the shelf and who needs first of all to identify a new skill for which he may qualify, and then to find out where to pursue it. This has to be and has actually become the primary picture of the local public library.

This is the challenge that we face when we talk now about reference. It's the challenge that the State Librarian and any member of his staff involved with the Legislature has to keep talking about. You can't sell legislators libraries as just sources of reading materials anymore. They want to see an absolute necessity being supported, and they can't identify the old type public library as a necessity.

I'm talking about a job to be done which is really the greater of our jobs, namely, the provision of information, of tying the local citizen to all the information resources of our entire state. Now local government, too, is hesitant about supporting libraries in the old concept. Some of you have reported to me, or to Elaine, in just the last three or four weeks, difficulty. Money is getting tight on the local level, and people are saying they can't go beyond what they did last year. If state aid rules and regulations would permit it, there are even a few who would cut back just a little bit if they could because they've got other things they want to support. This is not saying they are arbitrarily choosing sides and saying we'll support sanitation this year and libraries next year and so on. It's not saying that after the garbage collection the li-

braries come next, as we sometimes say in desperation. They've got a lot of things to do with their money, and they have done pretty well by libraries. Local support of public libraries increased about a million dollars last year — which is not insignificant. We managed to get a million and a half for this biennium in state aid — which also is not insignificant. We hope for and work towards a 50-50 state and local support of library service and we are making good progress towards it.

As for what will happen with the Federal dollar that goes into libraries, your guess is as good as mine. The Library Services and Construction Act as amended got through Congress last December 7 and 12. It authorizes a lot of funds to keep up the library program, but it has redirected their use to some extent. Now, the House has gone beyond the administration budget and has recommended that we be supported federally at least on the level we were last year. The Senate will act on that and probably will support and possibly recommend increasing it. Then it'll be a question of when and if and how the money will be released. So we're still dealing with the unknown as far as the federal dollar is concerned. We have to look to our local budget and our state budget for basic support. We have to sell ourselves and realize that our future is in reference. It is in the information we give and the access we give the local citizens to the means he needs for self development for any necessity that occurs in his life. This means we have to build materials and personnel capable of doing these things. In some instances the high school counselors still call and say I have a quiet, refined, very nice student here who is a natural for librarianship and I'd like to send her in for an interview. I have never refused to interview one of those people although not one in four is really the kind of material we are looking for in a library. The facts are there is a no more giving a profession in modern society than librarianship. You pick your clergymen and your teachers and your librarians and you've

got the people who have to be totally and absolutely giving and beside that they have to stay a jump ahead of all the rest of the people in the world so that they'll be able to give people things they don't even know they need. And I mean that. There was a time when no librarian would presume to guide beyond the reference question. You got a question. You did your best to answer it. Then, you dropped it. You didn't find that there were two other choices, or three other ways of approaching this problem. Partly because you were too busy, but mostly because we were too busy, did we provide answers and neglect guidance. Now, the situation is changed. The person who comes now may start out with a simple question, but an alert reference information librarian points out many related facets if the circumstances seem to warrant it. We know the questioner's characteristics. He's an age and has an educational background, and his need arises from his being displaced by a machine. Our response must be: can we help find something to fill this void that he now feels — that sent him in here, or to meet his immediate needs? We begin to pursue that and come up with three possible answers. Or suppose we're dealing with a student, and we see that he's pursuing something down one line, and we know that twenty-nine other students in his class are likely to have the same assignment. What then? The librarian who is thoughtful, who knows the materials in the library, who knows something about the current carryings-on technically and scientifically, and so on, the moon probe, whatever, may be able to suggest a little different approach. I don't know that it's possible to come up with thirty different goals for these kids, but a teacher could be educated somewhat as a result of the work that you did with her students.

I guess I'm talking about every reference information librarian becoming something of a Sherlock Holmes in that you don't just look at what is on the surface, but you begin to pick up the pieces, and to make a much broader picture, to find all the possibilities

— like so many spokes in a palmetto fan, or something of the sort, and then you can assign each of these to somebody. This is an aside. Some years ago, in Roanoke — maybe David Vaughan remembers this — I had a reference librarian on the staff there who found that a new book on insects that we had bought just that year for \$14.00 had been circulated only four times when it was discovered some pictures were cut out of it. In fact all the colored illustrations were gone. This librarian went down the list of person who had borrowed the book. One was a high school student. She called Jefferson High School and asked the biology teacher if she had assigned any papers on this particular subject since the date the book was first checked out. The teacher had. She asked if the person identified as a student were in her class. Yes. How was the paper illustrated? It seems that that paper had earned an A plus and was exceptionally well illustrated. Sure enough the illustrative material was out of our book. Whereupon, we confronted the parent of that high school junior. He was most cooperative. We Sherlocked it right on to his home, and when his young daughter came in from school, gave her the book and the paper. Yes, he bought the book and told her she was to keep it on her desk until she got married.

Of course, this is not the kind of sleuthing I want you to do, but that just came to me as I remember calling that lady a real Sherlock. It got to her that someone had dared to mutilate a new book, an expensive book. She pursued that loss like I wish all of us would pursue information for patrons.

Some of my best friends are reference librarians, as they say, and you are among them. Let me, in talking about this future of reference, also talk about the kind of financing we face right now, as far as reference service, information service, goes in North Carolina. I'm very carefully avoiding talking to you about In-WATS and TWX and the Interlibrary Loan procedure, because a young lady is going to follow me and do that. I think you want to know what the

status is for this kind of business right now. You know about the recommendations of the Advisory Budget Commission. Well, let's go further back than that. Back in the summer of 1969 we began to talk, the State Library Board and I, about the development of this Network which is important to North Carolina, which started at the State Library in 1968 as the In-WATS line and was open only to public libraries. It's gone on as you know. Well, we put \$273,030 for network development through June, 1973, in the planned budget and the State Library Board approved it, tentatively, in November of '69. In January of 1970 the budget went in to the State Budget Division. We requested \$273,030 for the expansion of the network, the resources network, on the concept that every resource in this state should be available to everybody in the State who can prove a need for it. Everytime you have a legitimate need, wherever you are, you should be able to get to the material if it's in this state. And of course, as we at the State Library say, if it isn't and your need is great enough, we'll go anywhere possible for it. We don't like to close any door and, thanks be to God, we seldom do. I know we have to close some, but you who work with our In-WATS and our regular reference staff know that closing doors on anybody is the hardest thing they do. They don't just go the second mile, they keep going until they almost fall in their tracks. This is the way it has to be with a good reference librarian. But let's get back to the budget now. The Advisory Budget Commission came to Raleigh for July 1st and 2nd, 1970, to talk to 20, or was it 25, agency heads about planning for the decade of the 70's. So I talked to them about your needs as far as the Network is concerned. Then in October, or late September, 1970, I appeared again before them in behalf of the budget itself. We couldn't talk money in July — we talked about what the network meant and who it was for and the fact that it was for necessary information and how we'd tie all things together and avoid unnecessary duplication, even in academic libraries which have to have big broad collections. We called it sharing of resources — sharing

from one end of North Carolina to the other. The Advisory Budget Commission and legislators liked this kind of thing. And, because we believe in it, it's easy to sell it to them. They recognize that this is what the future of our state is built on. Yes, no little portion of the future of our state is built on good information service and on access to every resource we have, and this, because it belongs to all of us, is no reason it should not be paid for by all of us through our taxes. When we came to them in the fall they were ready for questions they picked up in July. We pointed out that a man doesn't need tomorrow what he may need today to make a business decision. He needs it as quickly as he can get it, and this is what it's all about. The \$273,030 was recommended by the Advisory Budget Commission and it is in the budget at this point. The "B" budget has been approved through a sub committee, and is now before the Appropriations Committee. I presume that this recommendation is safe.

The Advisory Budget Commission did not recommend an increase in state aid. We requested three million dollars. That increase in state aid is also essential to the support of the Network. I mean to the support of our resources, our building of resources, and our exchanging of them so that the whole thing has to be spelled out again to the legislature. There was a hearing, six weeks ago. They listened, but it was obviously a negative situation. There were two very outstanding young legislators there — one from Randolph County and one from Brunswick or Columbus, he represents two—who asked the right kind of questions. I mean they were men who had used libraries, who had an idea what this was all about, what sharing is all about. In spite of that, I could see that we had lost the battle as far as state aid was concerned. So within two weeks, as luck would have it, and I guess a lot of hard work, some legislators who are good friends of libraries, managed to get us a second hearing before the subcommittee. There may be a few other instances of that this go-around, I don't know. So far as I know, that is the only second

hearing that has been granted, and it was for 7:45 in the morning, squeezed into a busy schedule for these legislators on the sub subcommittee, and remember I'm saying 2 subs there, of the subcommittee on General Government and Transportation. We spent the time talking about state aid, and they voted in my presence, I'm glad to say, which is the first time that's happened, and they voted for one-fourth of the amount we had requested which was the most they could do, and which means a total of \$750,000 increase in state aid for the biennium. It went from the sub subcommittee through the subcommittee with flying colors, and is now before the Joint Appropriations Committee. Yes, we have made it all the way to the Appropriations Committee with \$273,000+ for development of our resources network and with \$750,000 for increased state aid to public libraries plus some \$200,000 plus in state salaries for federal salaries that have to be assumed.

This money is also a part of the reference future. It's part of what you need to be interested in because we will not give good reference service in the future without this kind of financial support and back-up. Let me summarize just briefly what I've said to you. First of all, reference is our future. This is where our strength lies in getting support, not only fiscal support, but in getting support of the people. They know that they can find a substitute for some of our old services by watching TV, although they don't have a choice of which mystery they'll watch. There are some substitutes but they cannot substitute for a reference need of the moment.

The other point I want to make is that we need to make our information role more known simply because things that happen such as the meeting that went on all day yesterday didn't take into consideration that the State Library and public libraries and for that matter the academic libraries in this state are involved in planning for managerial and technical assistance to business, commerce and industry in North Carolina.

They didn't see us as part of or one of the links in this chain. It is tragic that this is still happening. We had to ask for an invitation to a meeting dealing with provision of information — information as it applies on the local level. Keep this thought in mind when you think of what kind of service you have to give, and what kind of image you have to create. Also, keep in mind the fact that you can suggest beyond the initial question when it comes from a student, that you are now in a position to actually guide people in their educational development.

Finally, take pride in the fact that you are among the most important people in this state. Yes, I really mean that because the future of North Carolina depends on the availability of information, on the availability of people dedicated to its dissemination, alert to every possibility of disseminating it, and willing to go that second mile to see that whatever is needed is done. Don't, as you meditate, retreat and think together on reference for these two and a half days, miss getting the whole picture and the part you play in it. You didn't come to praise yourselves — or get your halos on too tight, I know that, but I came to make them just as tight as I could, because I see you as perhaps the biggest single group in North Carolina to get the job done that has to be done in this state. The job really is a reference job, it's an information job and unless it's done progress won't be made.

Of course, it will be done in some degree other than by libraries and we want to be part of that team and let them be part of our team when it is done by others. Let's remember that no amount of that can replace us. We look to the computer, microfilm, to all these new reference aids that are coming up that you'll be hearing about the next couple of days. Always it's the dedicated reference librarian who holds the key. You are the key, and I close my comments to you on this note and that makes this the keynote address without all the formality that you wanted in a statistical extravaganza that wouldn't be typical of Phil Ogilvie under any circumstances as you all know.