NORTH CAROLINA
LIBRARIES

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From the President:
Thriving Together in Times of Change

As I sit down to reflect on the state of libraries and the challenges we face, I find myself both humbled and inspired by the resilience of our community. Libraries have always been a beacon of knowledge, a refuge for seekers of truth, and a foundation for strong, engaged communities. Yet, in recent years, the landscape in which we operate has shifted dramatically, bringing new stressors and uncertainties. From funding battles and intellectual freedom challenges to the evolving needs of our patrons, the role of libraries—and those of us who serve them—has never been more critical or complex.

Change, as we know, is both inevitable and relentless. The rapid pace of technological advancements, the growing polarization of public discourse, and the increased scrutiny of library collections and programming have placed significant pressure on our institutions. Many of us are navigating book challenges, budget constraints, staff shortages, and an ever-growing demand for digital access. These stressors can feel overwhelming, especially when compounded by personal and professional fatigue.

Yet, despite these challenges, libraries continue to stand firm as champions of intellectual freedom, equity, and lifelong learning. The question then becomes: How do we, as library professionals, maintain our motivation and continue to serve with passion and purpose in the face of adversity? It is easy to feel disheartened when our work is met with resistance, yet it is precisely in these moments that our mission becomes most vital. Our motivation can be renewed by remembering why we chose this profession in the first place: to serve our communities, to foster access to information, and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn and grow.

One way to stay motivated is to find strength in our collective efforts. None of us are in this alone. Across North Carolina and beyond, library workers, advocates, and supporters are standing up for the values that define our profession. Connecting with colleagues, sharing success stories, and seeking out professional development opportunities can reignite our sense of purpose and remind us of the impact we make every day.

In times of uncertainty, it is crucial to take advantage of the resources available to us. Membership in the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) offers community as well as extended benefits through NCLA's affiliations with organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA) and Unite Against Book Bans (UABB) which offer valuable support, advocacy tools, and professional development.

- **NCLA Membership:** As an association dedicated to supporting libraries across North Carolina, NCLA provides networking opportunities, training, and advocacy resources to help libraries navigate today's challenges. Whether through conference programming, committee work, or online discussions, NCLA fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. https://nclaonline.org/

- **ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF):** Intellectual freedom is under threat in many communities, making the work of the ALA OIF more important than ever. Their resources on censorship, book challenges, and policy development are invaluable for libraries facing these pressures. https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom

- **Unite Against Book Bans (UABB):** UABB provides resources such as toolkits, talking points, and advocacy guides to help individuals and communities oppose censorship and defend the freedom to read. They also offer support through networking opportunities, training sessions, and direct action strategies to empower advocates in protecting access to diverse books. https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/

One of the most rewarding aspects of our profession is the opportunity to come together, share experiences, and learn from one another. As we look ahead, I am excited about the upcoming 66th Biennial NCLA conference to be held October 13-17, 2025 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem. The conference theme, *Books and Beyond: Navigating New Frontiers*, is a call for us to reconnect, exchange ideas, and reaffirm our commitment to libraries in North Carolina. As noted on the conference website: "This year's theme focuses on all the work libraries and librarians do for their communities, from traditional book-related work to services, programs, and resources beyond that scope. It also encourages us to look towards the future, imagining and exploring how libraries can provide services and resources, and utilize emerging technologies, to meet the needs of a changing society." This focus on resilience, innovation, and collaboration will help provide us with the

tools to adapt to change, advocate for our institutions, and harness new technologies to better serve our patrons. More importantly, we will celebrate the strength of our community and the power of standing together in the face of adversity.

Difficult times test our resolve, but they also remind us of the enduring importance of libraries. We are more than just repositories of books; we are centers of learning, catalysts for civic engagement, and safe havens for exploration and discovery. The work we do matters, and it matters now more than ever. As we continue to navigate challenges and embrace change, let us do so with a spirit of unity and determination. By supporting one another, leveraging our collective resources, and staying true to our mission, we will not only withstand the pressures we face—we will thrive.

Thank you for your dedication to this profession and for all you do to ensure that libraries remain vibrant and essential spaces for our communities. I look forward to standing alongside you at the NCLA Conference in 2025 and beyond. Together, we are stronger.

WM. JOSEPH THOMAS EDITOR

From the Editor's Desk

Happy Spring! This issue contains a wonderful mix of research and practice articles spanning school, public, and academic libraries, and engaging employees with the arts as well as families with story time. Above, see a yellow (-green!) wood in the photo graciously provided by Joel Ferdon from the Leadership Institute, and later in this issue, be sure to read about the experiences of library leaders in the 2024 Institute. Among the 8 North Carolina books reviewed, you'll find a memoir from Bland Simpson, a collection of essays on our state's most famous playwright, Paul Green, photography of Ashe County, an account of a deadly confrontation in Yancey County in 1972, and a guide to roadside eateries in our state by famous UNC TV alumnus D. G. Martin.

I would like to draw the reader's attention to two other contributions in this issue. One is the President's column, encouraging us to support each other and stay true to our mission in order to thrive. With Dawn, I look forward to seeing you at the 2025 Biennial Conference in Winston-Salem! The other contribution in this issue to point out is the "From the Pages" column, which features Ray Moore. Ms. Moore's legacy stays with us in the award bearing her name that *North Carolina Libraries* confers at each Biennial Conference. See previous winners at https://www.ncl.ecu.edu/index.php/NCL/Moore_Award, and join us for the presentation in October!

Happy reading!

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN
by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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RITA REINSEL SOULEN AND VANESSA IRVIN EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

School Librarians and Teachers Embracing Community in Practice: Knowledge and Use of Digital Literacies and Media

66 Digital literacy skills empower students to become discerning consumers and producers of information, preparing them for the demands of a rapidly evolving digital world... 99

Abstract

Librarian researchers partnered with a university laboratory school to promote digital literacies to teachers through a community of practice using a librarian-teacher framework. Pre- and posttest surveys determined changes in digital literacy skills by school faculty and staff over one school year. Descriptive statistics indicate a positive change in faculty and staff familiarity with and use of digital content. Subgroup comparisons demonstrate large effect sizes for teacher familiarity with digital content by education level and position on the faculty. Administrative support at the school and university levels was vital in laying a solid foundation for this collaboration to develop and embed digital literacies into classroom instruction with expectations to foster growth in subsequent phases.

Engaging Community in Practice: Librarians and Teachers Embracing Knowledge and Use of Digital Literacies and Media

Communities of practice initiated by school librarians with teachers foster a supportive environment for sharing knowledge, expertise and resources. Through such communities, librarians and teachers can exchange ideas, strategies, and best practices for integrating information literacy skills and resources into the curriculum. This collaboration enhances instruction, promotes professional growth, and ultimately benefits students by providing them with richer learning experiences. University researchers in a Master of Library Science Program who had experience as school librarians engaged in a community of practice with teachers in a university-sponsored elementary school to promote digital literacies and media to faculty and staff.

The goal was to equip students with the skills to navigate, evaluate, and create digital content effectively. In today's information age, these abilities are essential for academic success, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship. Digital literacy skills empower students to become discerning consumers and producers of information, preparing them for the demands of a rapidly-evolving digital world, a critical issue relevant to school librarianship. This guiding assumption is so integral to the profession of school librarianship that the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards (2018) state that "[e]ducators and learners must be proficient in their use of available information technology" (p. 14) as a common belief.

Integrating digital literacies and media into classroom activities poses a challenge for many schools, and perhaps more so for university laboratory schools, which are often limited by staffing and space. Educators in small schools may struggle to find the time and resources to embed digital literacies and media into classroom activities. Teachers may understand the need to integrate technological resources into instruction but may not have a meaningful model for practice. This phenomenological research examines such practices through a case study within an elementary laboratory school in a small city in the southern USA.

The University School (pseudonym) is a teacher-training laboratory school providing research-based instruction for 114 students in kindergarten through

fifth grade (ages 5-12). Faculty and staff at the University School address students' academic needs and physical, social, and emotional development through partnerships with community organizations and the sponsoring university. The school administration identified the need for more engaged use of technology in classroom instruction, creating a unique research opportunity: equip the school with digital resources and media, then explore how that access may influence teaching and learning. To address this need for technology-enabled professional learning, the researchers set out to build an innovative partnership between the university's library science program faculty and the school's administration, faculty, and staff.

The context for this study was a partnership between university education researchers and the leadership team at the University School to address gaps in teachers' digital literacy skills evidenced by the state's department of education's educator survey tool, the *Digital Learning & Media Inventory* (*DLMI*) (NC DPI (a), n.d.). Iterative survey results informed ways to improve access to digital resources, develop digital literacy skills, and provide data to track pedagogical modifications over time. This study aims to demonstrate how a university-school research-practice partnership positively influenced teacher professional development through the knowledge and use of digital learning competencies and digital media use in classroom instruction.

Literature Review

Evans and Baker (2016) show that access to digital resources is essential for teacher competency and student academic development. Moreover, Santos-Green and Chassereau (2023) demonstrate that university and school partnerships provide a rich context for scholars and practitioners to collaborate as a community of practice. School librarians can be mediating partners for teachers' access to digital media for developing digital competencies in the classroom. Teachers' access to digital resources ensures that students have access to contemporary learning technologies and concepts. This literature review connects the idea of the importance of school libraries as a central resource for teachers' access to digital technology for professional development and learning.

Access to Library Services and Digital Resources

Access to the specialized skills of a school librarian has long been known to contribute to student success. In 1963, Gaver performed a groundbreaking research study showing that a centralized library collection with a full-time, certified school librarian positively correlates to higher student achievement. Lance & Kachel (2018) also demonstrated a positive correlation between school library programs and student achievement by examining student demographics, school funding levels, teacher-pupil ratios, and teacher qualifications. Pribesh et al. (2011) confirmed that school libraries boost student achievement and contribute to closing the achievement gap between the majority US student population and underrepresented student learners.

Providing access to, knowledge of, and use of digital learning tools is one facet of the role of school librarians. Access to diverse reading materials through digital libraries provides opportunities for transformative literacy instruction, inquiry-based learning, and increased student engagement (Taylor, et al., 2020). Quality school library programs significantly impact student achievement at all levels as measured by scores on standardized reading and English tests (Burgin & Bracy, 2003). Scores increase when school libraries have more staffing, more open hours, newer books, more student expenditures for print and digital materials, and subscriptions to digital services (Burgin and Bracy, 2003). Wine (2020) also found that when students had a full-time certified school librarian, they scored significantly higher on math and reading tests than those who lacked a librarian. In a global society, qualified school librarians play a major role in providing professional development for faculty and staff, increasing access to instruction for digital literacy skills, which translates into improved student access to digital media (Clephane, 2014; Johnston & Green, 2021).

Prioritizing the curation of digital library resources and embedding them into content area instruction is enabled by collaborative practice, which re-imagines the provision of library services beyond the traditional library print collections (Moen, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the necessity of teaching digital literacy skills and providing access to digital media when school and school library closures

resulted in shifts to online and hybrid instruction and limited library access. Soulen and Tedrow (2022) found significant differences in the frequency of access to school library materials relative to the pandemic. The differences most significantly impacted elementary level students (6–10 years old) due to substantial changes in preferred platforms to access print and digital books (Soulen & Tedrow, 2023). To support virtual learning environments, best practices for school librarians include demonstrating leadership in planning and support of technology use through teacher professional development in communities of practice to advance multiple literacies for students (Lewis, 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Wake, et al., 2022).

University and Laboratory School Partnerships
Since the early days of modern educational systems, schools supported by universities have endorsed efforts to address the gap between scholarly theory and real-world practice. Beginning in 1896, at the University of Chicago, John Dewey (1859-1952) attempted to translate his abstract concepts into a more practical learning environment using the Dewey School as a laboratory comparable to those in science courses (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936). Today, universities and college-affiliated schools engage in teacher training, curriculum development, research, professional development, and experimentation to improve teacher professional development and student learning (International Association of Laboratory Schools, 2019).

In a laboratory school setting, partnerships between university and school faculty have been shown to increase educational opportunities using digital media. Herro, Qian, and Jacques (2017) found that integrating digital media in classroom learning could be increased through a university faculty-in-residence program. Participating teachers valued an ongoing relationship with the university faculty resident to increase technology use, leading to the incorporation of new pedagogical approaches to incorporate digital tools in classroom instruction. Herro et al. (2017) found that providing authentic field experiences, honoring the local educational context, and advocating a balanced collaboration between university faculty and schoolteachers were crucial actions to cre-

ating appropriate instructional support to positively impact both teacher and student learning.

Research shows that developing a long-term, mutualistic research-practice partnership focusing on professional development is key to building successful community partnerships between universities and K-12 schools (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Hacker, 2013; Kelly, 2014; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017; Post et al., 2016). For this study, administrative backing at the school, university, and external stakeholder (e.g., the local public library) levels were essential. The researchers sought to develop a community of practice to develop digital learning competencies for teachers using the Herro, et al. (2017) model to increase technology use.

Professional Development for Digital Literacies and Media
Professional development for digital literacies empowers teachers to advance their pedagogy by creating a flexible learning environment for students (Yondler & Blau, 2023). According to Sadaf and Gezer (2020), the most reliable indicators of teachers' intentions are positive attitudes, perceptions of usefulness, and self-efficacy in digital literacy. Kui Xie, et al. (2023) demonstrated that as the commitment to stronger technology integrations shifts within the school environment, teachers also shift their own beliefs and practices for use of digital resource integration. Without professional development and knowledge of implementing technology into instruction, teachers struggle to unlock the potential for digital literacies to be used for higher level cognitive tasks (Taylor, et al., 2020). Thus, appropriate training and knowledge can impact student learning.

Librarian-Teacher Framework for Digital Learning Competencies in Community Practice
To conceptualize the endeavors of this study, the researchers developed the *Librarian- Teacher Framework for Digital Learning Competencies in Community Practice* (see Figure 1). This framework approaches the research with a conceptual lens that synthesizes the ideals of media literacy, community engagement, and communities of practice. The framework for this study embraces Zanin-Yost and Freie's (2020) stance
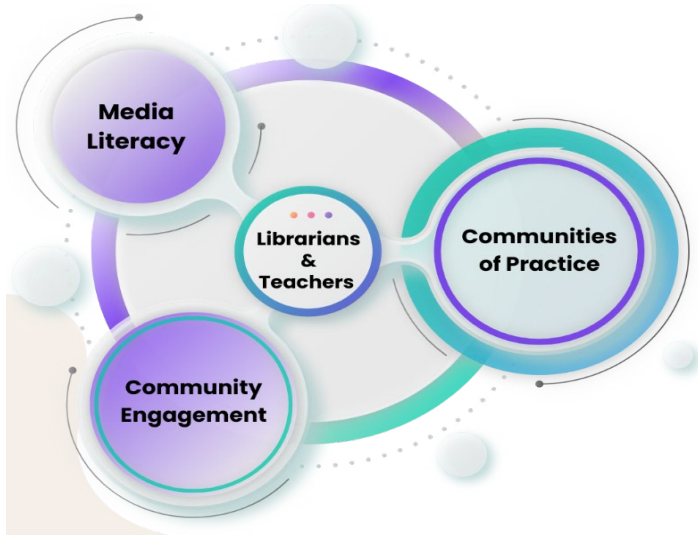
Figure 1: *The Librarian-Teacher Framework for Digital Learning Competencies in Community Practice*

that media literacy is essential to foster critical thinking in integrating legacy technologies with evolving technologies to facilitate digitally literate practices in teacher communities. Throughout this study, the librarian-researchers looked to Capse and Lopez's (2018) concept of community engagement to understand relationship-building as activism for strategically working with and in communities, conveying cultural competence, facilitating problem-solving, and engaging in collaborative teacher learning. The Wenger-Treyner model for communities of practice guides the intentional approach to developing professional learning within a group-oriented context that considers technology as a useful tool for reflective professional development (Wenger-Treyner, et al., 2023).

Research Questions

School librarians promote access to and use of digital literacies and media (Dawkins, 2020). As required by the state of North Carolina, school librarians and teachers use the *Digital Learning Competencies for Educators* instrument to integrate digital teaching and learning into their library and classroom instruction (NC DPI (b), n.d.). The state also provides digital resources for K-12 students such as ebooks, databases, encyclopedias, periodicals, learning media, archives, and historical and cultural resources. To understand teacher knowledge and use of these competencies and resources over time at the University School, the researchers posited the following questions:

RQ1: In what ways does a university-school community of practice centered on the use of digital resources influence teacher perceptions and practice of using a digital competencies framework to strengthen media literacy in classrooms?

RQ1(a): In what ways do professional development and related classroom activities centered on a digital learning competencies framework influence faculty knowledge and use of digital content?

RQ1(b): In what ways do professional development and related classroom activities centered on a digital learning competencies framework influence faculty knowledge and use of essential digital literacy skills?

RQ2: In what ways do educator communities of practice differ in knowledge and use of digital content and demonstration of digital literacy skills for students in classrooms based on educational background, position on the faculty, and years of experience?

Methods

The University School serves students in an urban neighborhood in a small city that is the hub of rural areas in its region of North Carolina. The local public university employs the school's administration, faculty, and staff, who were the participants of this study. There were 21 participants during the pre-testing phase of the study, that whittled down to 15 participants by the post-testing phase. The researchers distributed a survey to participants where demographics were collected for education level, position on the faculty, and years of instructional experience (see Appendix A). Most respondents had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, the minimal requirement for teaching in this state. Half of the respondents for the pre-testing phase (T1) were teachers, while 60% of respondents were teachers at the post-testing phase (T2) (see Appendix A). For both T1 and T2, most respondents had either 0-5 years or more than 20 years of instructional experience, representing educators at the beginning or near the end of their careers.

Data Sources

To assist in planning digital learning efforts, the school uses a survey instrument called the *Digital Learning & Media Inventory* (*DLMI*) to generate data about school media and technology programs for reporting outcomes to district and state-level stakeholders. Using the DLMI as a model, the researchers developed a survey to investigate faculty and staff levels of familiarity with and frequency of use of the *Digital Learning Competencies for Educators*, digital content, and digital literacy skills at the University School (Digital Teaching and Learning, n.d.). The survey consisted of 14 Likert response content items (including sub-items) on a scale of one to four and three demographic items. Of the total items on the survey, the researchers address five items in this study (see Figure 2).

University School faculty and staff were surveyed at T1. The results of this first survey determined the next steps for improving access to and use of digital literacy and media resources for University School faculty and staff. During the interim school year, the researchers provided interventions for teacher professional development and student classroom activities. The researchers conducted the same survey one year later to determine the change over time from T1 to T2.

Interventions

The researchers and the school leadership team collaboratively developed a 3-year plan to increase teacher knowledge and use of digital literacies and media in the classroom (see Appendix B). Interventions for teacher professional development included the Digital Learning Competencies for Educators, examples of online resources for teaching digital literacy skills, and providing access to and suggestions for the use of a state-sponsored online K-12 educational portal called NCWiseOwl, which provides access to credible and vetted online databases, magazines, primary sources, encyclopedias, and ebooks. Interventions for classroom instruction included the researchers working with 4th and 5th grade students (ages 9-11) to develop essential digital literacy

Item/Sub-Item	Response Options			
1. How familiar are you with the Digital Learning Competencies for Educators?	Not at all familiar	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar
2. How familiar are you with the following digital content? NCWiseOwl*	Not at all familiar	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar
3. How often do you use the following digital content at your school? NCWiseOwl*	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
4. How familiar are your students with these digital literacy skills- keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety?	Not at all familiar	Somewhat familiar	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar
5. How often do you teach your students these digital literacy skills- keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often

Figure 2. Survey Content Items

*Note: At the time of this study, NCWiseOwl was a free online content portal for public school teachers and students in this state to access digital resources. It is now incorporated into a password-protected interface for proprietary usage.

skills as defined in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Digital Teaching & Learning Standards (i.e., keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety), a virtual author visit discussing how digital literacy skills are integrated into the writing process, and a virtual library field trip combining the use of school and public library resources for addressing digital literacies (NC DPI (b), n.d.).

Data Analysis

The pretest and posttest survey results were uploaded to a statistical analysis software package (SPSS) to examine the data using descriptive statistics. Change over time was determined by comparing mean responses on the two surveys. Subgroup comparisons supported an assumption that educators may vary in their knowledge and use of digital literacies and media based on their classroom experience, educational background, and position on the faculty.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are reported while comparing pretest to posttest data due to the varied composition of the faculty and staff over this study's period. As there was considerable attrition and hiring between T1 and T2, and since group variability is restricted to measuring differences between an individual's responses between time points, more robust analysis was deemed inappropriate. The small number of University School faculty and staff was limited; therefore, the sample of participants who completed both surveys was not large enough to provide valid results for determining significant differences over time. Rather, changes over time of +/- 10.0% or greater are noted as substantial differences.

Subgroup Comparisons

A series of independent samples t-tests examined the differences between subgroups by years of experience, education level, and teaching responsibilities. Homogeneity of variance was assumed due to small sample size and significance was set at p < .05.

Results

This study sought to demonstrate how a librarian-to-teacher community of practice improves teacher knowledge and use of digital learning competencies

and media use in classroom instruction. Librarian researchers surveyed teachers to determine how professional development centered on digital learning competencies influenced knowledge and use of digital content and digital literacy skills. Educator subgroups differed in this knowledge and use of digital content and digital literacy skills based on educational background, position on the faculty, and years of experience.

Digital Content

To explore the first research question, "In what ways does a university-school community of practice centered on the use of digital resources influence teacher perceptions and practice of using a digital competencies framework to strengthen media literacy in classrooms?" with a focus on the sub-research question that specified digital content as a variable, descriptive statistics were generated from the survey instrument and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics indicate a substantial positive change of +0.39 in mean over time for faculty and staff familiarity with the Digital Learning Competencies for Educators from T1 (M = 1.81 SD = .750) to T2 (M = 2.20 SD = .862). Table 1 shows that teachers' familiarity with teacher technology standards increased over time once introduced to the content by a school librarian.

Descriptive statistics indicate a substantial positive change of +0.13 in mean over time for faculty and staff familiarity with NCWiseOwl from T1 (M = 2.14 SD = 1.014) to T2 (M = 2.27 SD = .704) (see Table 2).

Descriptive statistics also indicate a substantial positive change of +0.54 in the mean over time for the frequency of faculty and staff use of NCWiseOwl from T1 (M = 1.19 SD = .680) to T2 (M = 1.73 SD = 1.033) (see Table 3).

Tables 2 and 3, when triangulated with Table 1, illustrate that when school librarians are present and engaged in a school community, faculty and staff are introduced to useful resources and will increase their familiarity and use of those resources over time.

Digital Literacy Skills

Research question 1, with sub-question b, aims to investigate teacher/staff knowledge and frequency of

Table 1. Faculty and Staff Familiarity with Digital Content: Digital Learning Competencies for Educators

	T1 (n = 21)		T2 (n =15)		Mean Difference
	M = 1.81 SD = .750		M = 2.20 SD = .862		Δ +0.39
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Change Over Time**
Not at all familiar	8	38.1%	3	20.0%	-18.1%
Somewhat familiar	9	42.9%	7	46.7%	+3.8%
Familiar	4	19.1%	4	26.7%	+7.6%
Very familiar	0	0.0%	1	6.7%	+6.7%

Table 2. Faculty and Staff Familiarity with Digital Content: NCWiseOwl

	T1 (n = 21)		T2 (n = 15)		Mean Difference
	M = 2.14 SD = 1.014		M = 2.27 SD = .704		Δ +0.13
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Change Over Time**
Not at all familiar	7	33.3%	1	6.7%	-26.6%
Somewhat familiar	6	28.6%	10	66.7%	+38.1%
Familiar	6	28.6%	3	20.0%	-8.6%
Very familiar	2	9.5%	1	6.7%	-2.8%

Table 3. Faculty and Staff Frequency of Use of Digital Content: NCWiseOwl

	T1 (n = 21)		T2 (n = 15)		Mean Difference
	M = 1.19 SD = .680		M = 1.73 SD = 1.033		Δ +0.54
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Change Over Time**
Never	19	90.5%	8	53.3%	-37.2%
Sometimes	1	4.8%	5	33.3%	+28.5%
Often	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	-
Very often	1	4.8%	2	13.3%	+8.5%

teaching of digital literacy skills by asking, "In what ways does a university-school community of practice centered on the use of digital resources influence teacher perceptions and practice of using a digital competencies framework to strengthen media literacy in classrooms?" with the sub-question focused on the variable, knowledge and use of essential digital literacy skills such as keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety.

For teacher perception of student familiarity with keyboarding skills (see Table 4), descriptive statistics indicate no change in the mean over time. For digital citizenship, there was a substantial positive change of +0.63 from T1 (M =1.50, SD = .889) to T2 (M = 2.13, SD = .915). Additionally, there was a substantial positive difference of +0.20 from T1 (M = 1.80, SD = .834) to T2 (M = 2.00, SD = .926) for online safety.

For the frequency of teaching keyboarding skills (see Table 5), descriptive statistics indicate a posi-

tive change of +0.05 from T1 (M =1.75, SD = .910) to T2 (M = 1.80, SD = .775). For the frequency of teaching digital citizenship skills, descriptive statistics indicate a negative change of -0.03 from T1 (M = 1.70 SD = .923) to T2 (M = 1.67 SD = 0.724). Additionally, for the frequency of teaching online safety skills, descriptive statistics indicate a positive change of +0.08 for online safety from T1 (M = 1.85, SD = .875) to T2 (M = 1.93, SD = .704).

Subgroup Comparisons

Research question 2 investigates ways that educator communities of practice differ in knowledge and use of digital content and demonstration of digital literacy skills based on educational background, position on the faculty, and years of experience. Results of independent samples t-tests for both the pretest and posttest were used to further examine differences among subgroups, demonstrating significant differences based on educational background, position on

Table 4. Faculty and Staff Perception of Student Familiarity with Digital Literacy Skills

	T1 (n = 20)		T2 (n = 15)		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Change Over Time
Keyboarding	M = 2.20 SD = 1.005		M = 2.20 SD = .561		Δ 0.00
Not at all familiar	6	30.0%	1	6.7%	-23.3%
Somewhat familiar	6	30.0%	10	66.7%	+36.7%
Familiar	6	30.0%	4	26.7%	-3.3%
Very familiar	2	10.0%	0	0.0%	-10.0%
Digital Citizenship	M = 1.50 SD = 0.889		M = 2.13 SD = 0.915		Δ +0.63
Not at all familiar	14	70.0%	4	26.7%	-43.3%
Somewhat familiar	3	15.0%	6	40.0%	+25.0%
Familiar	2	10.0%	4	26.7%	+16.7%
Very familiar	1	5.0%	1	6.7%	+1.7%
Online Safety	M = 1.80 SD = 0.834		M = 2.00 SD = 0.926		Δ +0.20
Not at all familiar	9	45.0%	5	33.3%	-11.7%
Somewhat familiar	6	30.0%	6	40.0%	+10.0%
Familiar	5	25.0%	3	20.0%	-5.0%
Very familiar	0	0.0%	1	6.7%	+6.7%

	T1 (n = 20)		T2 (n = 15)		
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Change Over Time
Keyboarding	*M* = 1.75 *SD* = .910		*M* = 1.80 *SD* = .775		Δ +0.05
Never	10	50.0%	5	33.3%	-16.7%
Sometimes	6	30.0%	9	60.0%	+30.0%
Often	3	15.0%	0	0.0%	-15.0%
Very often	1	5.0%	1	6.7%	+1.7%
Digital Citizenship	*M* = 1.70 *SD* = .923		*M* = 1.67 *SD* = 0.724		Δ -0.03
Never	11	55.0%	7	46.7%	-8.3%
Sometimes	5	25.0%	6	40.0%	+15.0%
Often	3	15.0%	2	13.3%	-1.7%
Very often	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	-5.0%
Online Safety	*M* = 1.85 *SD* = 0.875		*M* = 1.93 *SD* = 0.704		Δ +0.08
Never	8	40.0%	4	26.7%	-13.3%
Sometimes	8	40.0%	8	53.3%	+13.3%
Often	3	15.0%	3	20.0%	+5.0%
Very often	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	-5.0%

the faculty, and years of experience.

Pretest Subgroup Comparisons.

Using the pretest results (see Appendix C), the researchers conducted a series of independent samples *t*-tests to determine whether there were differences by educator characteristics, including education level, teaching responsibilities, and experience level in educator familiarity with digital content, how often educators used digital content, student familiarity with online safety skills, how often educators taught digital citizenship skills, and how often educators taught online safety skills.

Comparing educators with an Associate's degree or B.A./B.S. degree (*n* = 11) (*M* = 2.55, *SD* = 1.036) to those with an advanced certificate, Master's degree or terminal degree (*n* = 9) (*M* = 1.78, *SD* = .833), differences in educator familiarity with NCWiseOwl digital content were found to be significant $t(18) = 1.796$, $p = .045$, $d = .951$, a large effect size.

Also, comparing paraprofessional educators with an Associate's degree (*n* = 3) (*M* = 3.67, *SD* =5.77) to professional educators with a B.A./B.S. or higher (*n* = 17) (*M* = 1.94, *SD* = .827), significant differences were found for educator familiarity with NCWiseOwl digital content, $t(18) = 3.431$, $p = .001$, $d = .803$, a large effect size.

Comparing beginning educators with 0-5 years of experience (*n* = 7) (*M* = 1.57, *SD* = 1.134) to more seasoned educators with 6 or more years of experience (*n* = 13) (*M* = 1.00, *SD* = .000), differences in how often educators used NCWiseOwl digital content were found to be significant, $t(18) = 1.862$, $p = .040$, $d = .655$, a medium effect size. Comparing paraprofessional educators (*n* = 3) (*M* = 2.00, *SD* =1.732) to professional educators (*n* = 17) (*M* = 1.06, *SD* = .243), differences in how often educators used NCWiseOwl digital content were found to be significant, $t(18) = 2.420$, $p = .013$, $d = .621$, a medium effect size. Comparing paraprofessional

educators (*n* = 3) (*M* = 2.67, *SD* = .577) to professional educators (*n* = 17) (*M* = 1.65, *SD* = .786), differences in student familiarity with digital literacy skills for online safety were found to be significant, *t*(18) = 2.127, *p* = .024, *d* = .766, a medium effect size.

Frequency of teaching several digital literacy skills varied by educator characteristics. Comparing classroom teachers (*n* = 10) (*M* = 2.10, *SD* = .994) to teacher assistants, support staff, and administrators (*n* = 10) (*M* = 1.30, *SD* = .675), differences in how often educators taught their students digital citizenship skills were found to be significant, *t*(18) = 2.105, *p* = .025, *d* = .850, a large effect size. Comparing classroom teachers (*n* = 10) (*M* = 2.20, *SD* =.919) to teacher assistants, support staff, and administrators (*n* = 10) (*M* = 1.50, *SD* = .707), differences in how often educators taught their students online safety skills were found to be significant, *t*(18) = 1.909, *p* = .036, *d* = .820, a large effect size. Also, comparing classroom educators (*n* = 15) (*M* = 2.07, *SD* = .884) to non-classroom educators (*n* =5) (*M* = 1.20, *SD* = .447), significant differences were found in how often educators taught online safety skills, *t*(18) = 2.079, *p* = .026, *d* = .807, a large effect size.

Posttest Subgroup Comparisons.

Using the posttest results (see Appendix D), the researchers conducted a series of independent samples *t*-tests to determine whether there were differences in education level, teaching responsibilities, and experience level in educator familiarity with the NC Digital Learning Competencies for Educators. Comparing paraprofessional educators holding an Associate's degree (*n* = 2) (*M* = 1.00, *SD* = .000) to professional educators holding a B.S. or B.A. or higher (*n* = 13) (*M* = 2.38, *SD* = .786), differences in educator familiarity with the *Digital Learning Competencies for Educators* were found to be significant, *t*(13) = -2.471, *p* = .014, *d* = .738, a medium effect size.

Student familiarity with several digital literacy skills varied by educator characteristics. Comparing classroom educators, including teachers and teacher assistants, (*n* =12) (*M* = 2.33, *SD* = .492) to non-classroom educators, including support staff and administrators, (*n* = 3) (*M* = 1.67, *SD* = .577),

differences in student familiarity with keyboarding skills were found to be significant, *t*(13) = 2.040, *p* = .031, *d* = .506, a medium effect size. Comparing classroom educators (*n* = 12) (*M* = 2.33, *SD* = .888) to non-classroom educators (*n* = 3) (*M* = 1.33, *SD* = .577), differences in student familiarity with digital citizenship skills were found to be significant, *t*(13) = 1.828, *p* = .045, *d* = .847, a large effect size. Comparing paraprofessional educators (*n* = 2) (*M* = 3.00, *SD* =.1.414) to professional educators (*n* = 13) (*M* = 1.85, *SD* = .801), differences in student familiarity with online safety skills were also found to be significant, *t*(13) = 1.759, *p* = .051, *d* = .863, a large effect size.

Discussion

Initial survey responses demonstrated the need to provide professional development centered on digital literacies and media for the faculty at the University School. Three professional development sessions for University School faculty and staff were held during this study. For the first session, participants reported on the results of the pretest survey and planned professional development activities. During the second session, participants discussed topics such as the state *Digital Teaching & Learning Standards* (NC DPI (b), n.d.) for classroom teachers and students, the newly-developed curated collection of free media resources, and how to use the digital resources provided on the NCWiseOwl platform. The third session involved a collaborative review of NCWiseOwl and resources for teaching three essential digital literacy skills: keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety. These sessions are examples of ongoing professional development in communities of practice, which, when situated in day-to-day work, can shift collective knowledge, understanding, and pedagogical outcomes (Farrell et al., 2022).

During the school year, honors college undergraduates and graduate assistants from the university provided weekly small group instruction in the 4th and 5th grades to introduce digital literacy skills such as keyboarding, digital citizenship, and online safety to the students. Additionally, to build relationships with the community, the researchers and undergraduate students hosted a table at the University School STEM Night and participated in Family Curriculum

Night. These activities gave the researchers time to engage with the school community, including the K-5 students and their families.

The researchers attempted to curate free resources from the worldwide web as a digital library, but the collection did not meet expectations. Initially, the intent was to place a link on the school webpage so that the school community could access these resources. However, resources in the public domain posed access problems for the nascent digital school library because items available freely online were often outdated, incompatible with students' age or interest levels, or did not align with the curriculum. There were also concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusion because resources whose content was controlled by others sometimes represented antiquated, inaccurate viewpoints and content which could generate misinformation to students. For these reasons, the digital library was placed only on faculty and staff desktops.

Fortunately, the digital collection was awarded funding from a university scholarship academy, which then allowed the researcher-librarians to purchase vetted resources to develop a more standardized digital library. Purchased e-books were placed on a Follett Shelf virtual educational platform, which had several advantages. Since the shelf did not require a circulation system, all e-books were selected with multi-user access to avoid the need for library management to borrow/download/return e-books. Materials were nonfiction and intentionally selected for curricular connections to be used for project-based learning activities. The disadvantage was that continued funding for the expansion of this digital library was not immediately attainable, prompting the researchers to investigate additional sources of revenue.

The data from this study confirms that a librarian's presence and engagement in a school community is crucial, as demonstrated by educators in the school exhibiting substantial positive change in familiarity and use of librarian-introduced digital literacies and media. This ongoing relationship between the librarians and teachers provides greater opportunity for the teachers using new pedagogical approaches and new digital tools (Herro, et al., 2016). Independent public schools with a small faculty and staff foster a familial culture that establishes a viable and sustainable community of practice where embedded librarians can contribute valuable knowledge and information for ongoing teacher professional development, particularly regarding digital literacy skills and classroom media use.

Overall, subgroup comparisons using pretest results demonstrate that educators more tied to the classroom were more likely to be familiar with and use digital resources and skills in daily instruction. Results show that these educators had more familiarity with the provided digital resources and were more likely to use these resources in the classroom, teach digital citizenship and online safety skills, and perceive greater levels of online safety skills in their students. School leaders, such as administrators and specialists, who are less involved in day-to-day instruction may be able to leverage their leadership skills to lend greater importance to digital learning competencies and encourage teachers to increase technology use in their classrooms. Additionally, "reverse mentoring" by newer-to-the-profession educators may encourage more seasoned faculty to explore digital skills and resources (Valle et al., 2022).

Discussion on Subgroup Comparisons

Subgroup comparisons of pretest and posttest results identified similarities and differences in familiarity and use of digital literacy and media. Significant differences were found by subgroup using both pretest and posttest results in several areas (Appendix D). Using the posttest data, a significant difference was found for educator familiarity with the *Digital Learning Competencies for Educators* by education level, a difference that was not found in the pretest results. Professional educators holding at least a bachelor's degree were more likely to be familiar with these digital learning competencies. This stands to reason as professional educators would have attended the professional development sessions held for this project which introduced these competencies to faculty. Professional educators would also be more likely to have attended a university educator preparation program that included exposure to these competencies.

A significant difference was found for student familiarity with digital literacy skills for online safety by educator's education level. Like the pretest results,

paraprofessional educators were more likely to see higher student familiarity with online safety skills than professional educators. The reasons for this are unexplained. However, it may be that professional educators with greater knowledge of child development and educational theory may be more aware of the need for robust online safety skills.

Significant differences were found for student familiarity with digital literacy skills for both keyboarding and digital citizenship by teaching responsibilities. Classroom educators, including teachers and teacher assistants, were more likely than their non-classroom counterparts, including support staff and administrators, to perceive higher student familiarity with keyboarding and digital citizenship. This stands to reason as classroom educators would be more familiar with students' daily experiences as they navigate the digital world.

Overall, posttest results indicate less variability among subgroups than pretest results. Exposure to the interventions within this study may provide a partial explanation for leveraging educators' knowledge and use of digital competencies in the first year of this three-year plan. Faculty education level and position/rank may determine teacher and student knowledge and use of digital content and literacy skills as subgroups showed large effect sizes in practical application. The potential exists to provide further professional development and classroom experiences to promote digital literacies and media for faculty, staff, and students at the University School.

COVID-19 Considerations

The first year of this study occurred while the University School community experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that many students faced academic setbacks because of school closures, restrictions, and remote learning, the positive incremental results of this study are encouraging. Just as Kui Xie, et al. (2023) noted that changes in teachers' beliefs about integrating educational digital resources in K-12 classrooms lags behind institutional change and individual practice, overcoming a post-pandemic teacher resistance to digital, online, or virtual activities may be challenging. Encouraging the teachers to be more self-reliant when using digital content while working to embed digital resources and pro-

gramming into the school environment is key. As a result, the researchers expect to see more application of digital media and essential digital literacy skills in classrooms over the next few years, including emphasizing the importance of using credible resources, even for the youngest students.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include a small sample size which limits generalizability, and self-reporting by survey respondents, which may lead to bias. The researchers could not report significant differences between the surveys due to attrition and hiring between school years. Additionally, some survey respondents were not classroom teachers; therefore, their attendance at professional development and control over the teaching environment may been limited.

Future Directions

This university-school partnership continued through the completion of the established three-year plan, including professional development, selection of additional materials purchases for the digital school library, and classroom activities using students' essential digital literacy skills. Through this partnership, the researchers continued transforming teaching and learning by integrating more technology into cognitively complex tasks in the classroom (Taylor et al., 2020). This ongoing community engagement was an essential aspect to incorporating researcher-librarians as vital partners in a community of practice with teachers and the entire school community. The survey, which will be repeated at the close of the following two school years, will continue to track change to determine growth. Follow-up focus group interviews with teachers will provide rich descriptions of participant experiences.

Conclusion

Change is hard, and even harder when initiated by visitors in the building. However, integrating digital literacies and media into the school curriculum through a librarian-teacher community of practice is paramount to providing rigorous educational opportunities in a fast-changing digital landscape. Even with strong administrative support, overcoming the inertia of the status quo takes long-term dedica-

tion. This analysis shows that positive change has taken place over the first year of this collaboration, and further analysis of the data for Years 2 and 3 of this three-year plan may demonstrate more positive change as faculty, staff, and students became more adept at using digital literacies and media for lifelong learning.

The long-term goal of this university-school community of practice is to provide digital school library resources and services to the faculty, staff, and students at the University School, including developing digital literacies and curating digital media resources as a first step. Embedding these tools into everyday lessons will be the next challenge. The experiences of the researchers at this University School may serve as a model for small and underfunded schools worldwide who face challenges for providing digital literacies and media in a traditional school environment. The researchers anticipate continued engagement with this community in practice to embrace knowledge and use of digital literacies and media at the University School, ultimately influencing the academic growth of these students.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Respondent Demographics

	T1 Spring 2021 (*n* =20)		T2 Spring 2022 (*n*=15)	
Education level				
Associate's degree	3	15.0%	2	13.3%
Bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.)	8	40.0%	3	20.0%
Master's degree	7	35.0%	7	46.7%
Advanced degree	2	10.0%	3	20.0%
(EdD, PhD, JD, or other advanced degree)				
Position				
Teacher	10	50.0%	9	60.0%
Teacher Assistant	5	25.0%	3	20.0%
Support Staff/Administration	5	25.0%	3	20.0%
Years of instructional experience				
0-5 years	7	35.0%	4	26.7%
6-10 years	3	15.0%	1	6.7%
11-15 years	2	10.0%	1	6.7%
16-20 years	3	15.0%	2	13.3%
More than 20 years	5	25.0%	7	46.7%

Note: One respondent did not complete the demographic items

Appendix B: 3-Year Plan

Year 1 SY 2021-2022		Year 2 SY 2022-2023		Year 3 SY 2023-2024	
Professional Development	**Instructional Application**	**Professional Development**	**Instructional Application**	**Professional Development**	**Instructional Application**
NC Digital Learning Competencies (Introduction)	Student learning centers for essential literacy skills •Keyboard, digital citizenship, online safety • EC Scholar/GA • $ student incentives	NC Digital Learning Competencies (Continued)	Project Based Learning (PBLS) projects with digital presentations • GA	NC Digital Learning Competencies (Continued)	PBL projects with digital presentations
Digital Content (Introduction) • NCWiseOwl • School Digital Library Resources •Public Library Resources	Field trips $ • EC Scholar/GA • Public Library • Bookmobile • Teacher Resource Center	Digital Content (Continued) • NCWiseOwl • School Digital Library Resources • Public Library Resources	Student essential digital literacy skills • Digital presentations • Email/online communication • GA	Digital Content (Continued) • NCWiseOwl • School Digital Library Resources • Public Library Resources	Student essential digital literacy skills Select (3) from computational thinking, web browsing, visual mapping, word processing, spreadsheets, databases
Student essential digital literacy skills •Keyboarding •Digital citizenship • Online safety	Author visit $ •EC Scholar/GA	Student essential digital literacy skills • Digital presentations • Email/online communications	• GA	Student essential digital literacy skills	
		Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Introduction) Using purchased books		Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Continued)	

*Purchase Project Based Learning books for Year 2 Professional Development $

EC Scholars: East Carolina merit scholarship program which recognizes outstanding academic performance, commitment to community engagement and strong leadership skills.
GA: Graduate Assistant

$ Indicates funds provided by the university Engaged Outreach Scholarship Academy

Interventions consisted of professional development activities for faculty/staff and in-classroom learning experiences for students.

- Keyboarding demonstration table at Family STEM Night
- Grades 4-5 (ages 9-12) classroom small group digital literacies learning centers
- Digital literacies posters in classrooms and hallways
- Grades K-5 (ages 5-12) virtual field trip with local public library
- Grades 2-5 (ages 8-12) author virtual visit
- Curated digital library of free online resources for faculty/staff
- Curated digital library of purchased curriculum-related nonfiction interactive ebooks
- Ongoing monthly visits by public library bookmobile and bookmobile at Family Curriculum Night
- Faculty/staff professional developments for NC Digital Learning Competencies for Educators, digital content including NC WiseOwl and public library digital resources, and student essential digital literacy skills
- Faculty field trip to university Teacher Resource Center
- Purchase of Project Based Learning texts (Elliott, 2020) for University School faculty

Appendix C: Pretest Subgroup Comparisons

Pretest Comparisons

Educator familiarity with NCWiseOwl by education level

Associates or BA/BS	Advanced certificate, Master's, or terminal degree
(n=11)	(n=9)
M = 2.55, SD = 1.036	M = 1.78, SD = .833

Educator familiarity with NCWiseOwl by education level

Paraprofessional educators	Professional educators
(n = 3)	(n = 17)
M = 3.67, SD =5.77	M = 1.94, SD = .827

Frequency of use NCWiseOwl by experience level

0-5 years of experience	6+ years of experience
(n = 7)	(n = 13)
M = 1.57, SD = 1.134	M = 1.00, SD = .000

Frequency of use NCWiseOwl by education level

Paraprofessional educators	Professional educators
(n = 3)	(n = 17)
M = 2.00, SD =1.732	M = 1.06, SD = .243)

Student familiarity with online safety by educator's education level

Paraprofessional educators	Professional educators
(n = 3)	(n = 17)
M = 2.67, SD =.577)	M = 1.65, SD = .786

Frequency of teaching digital citizenship by teaching responsibilities

Classroom educators	Teacher assistants, support staff, or administrators
(n = 10)	(n = 10)
M = 2.10, SD =.994)	M = 1.30, SD = .675

Frequency of teaching online safety by teaching responsibilities

Classroom teachers

(*n* = 10)

M = 2.20, *SD* =.919

Teacher assistants, support staff, or administrators

(*n* = 10)

M = 1.50, *SD* = .707

Frequency of teaching online safety by teaching responsibilities

Classroom educators

 (*n* = 15)

M = 2.07, *SD* = .884

Nonclassroom educators

(*n* = 5)

M = 1.20, *SD* = .447

Appendix C. Listing of Significant Pre-test Results

Appendix D: Posttest Subgroup Comparisons

Posttest Subgroup Comparisons

Educator familiarity with NC Digital Competencies for Educators by education level

Paraprofessional educators

(*n* = 2)

M = 1.00, *SD*=.000

Professional educators

(*n* = 13)

M = 2.38, *SD* = .786

Student familiarity with keyboarding by teaching responsibilities

Classroom educators

(*n* =12)

M =2.33, *SD* =.492)

Non-classroom educators

(*n* = 3)

M = 1.67, *SD* = .577

Student familiarity with digital citizenship by teaching responsibilities

Classroom educators

(*n* = 12)

M = 2.33, *SD* = .888

Non-classroom educators

(*n* = 3)

M = 1.33, *SD* = .577

Student familiarity with online safety by educator's education level

Paraprofessional educators

(*n* = 2)

M =3.00, *SD* =.1.414

Professional educators

(*n* = 13)

M = 1.85, *SD* = .801

Appendix D. Listing of Significant Post-test Comparisons

LAURA BRIGHT EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Engaging the Arts for Library Employee Wellbeing

Libraries of all types provide resources that promote creative activity and boost the wellness of their respective communities in some way. When considering arts and wellbeing within the context of libraries, we may automatically think of resources and services for patrons. However, many libraries are also well-prepared to promote employee wellbeing via creative activities at informal meetups or during professional development sessions. In this article, I investigate how creative art-based activities support wellness, particularly with respect to employees. I also share insight on planning and promoting arts-based programs for library employees and give examples of creative projects that promote mindfulness and positive interpersonal relationships.

Wellbeing can incorporate many different facets of life, and as a broad concept, it has many definitions. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019) defines wellbeing as "the comprehensive view of how individuals and communities experience and evaluate their lives, including their physical and mental health and having the skills and opportunities to construct meaningful futures" (p. 4). Wellbeing may refer to social, community, mental, emotional, occupational, intellectual, or other types of wellness.

Like wellbeing, "the arts" can refer to a broad range of ideas. Involvement in the arts can be active, such as playing an instrument, forming a sculpture, or acting in a play. However, it can also be passive, such as listening to music, viewing a painting, or watching a theatre production. Participation in the arts is prevalent across the U.S., and has many benefits, such as boosting our overall wellbeing and even our productivity and creativity at work (Blumencweig, 2020). According to recent government data, 54% of U.S. adults attend creative arts or cultural activities; 54% create or perform art; 57% read short stories, novels, poems, or plays; and 74% use digital media to consume artistic content (National Endowment for the Arts, 2019).

Literature Review

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), job stress is "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker," and it is influenced by individual differences, workload demands, and workplace conditions (NIOSH, 2014). Workplace stress impacts our overall wellbeing and creates effects related to physiological disorders, such as gastrointestinal disorders; emotional disorders, such as inability to concentrate; and behavioral disorders, such as communication problems (Nekoranec, 2015).

When workplace stress becomes excessive, burnout can occur. Burnout is "a prolonged stress response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job" and is defined by "the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy" (Maslach, 2016, p. 351). Individual factors, like personality type, can make some employees more at risk of burnout and its effects than others (Nekoranec, 2015). The effects of work stress and burnout extend beyond individual employees by affecting interpersonal relationships with others and social functioning. For example, employees experiencing burnout may disrupt job tasks, cause personal conflicts with coworkers, or exhibit hostile responses in the workplace (Maslach, 2016).

Job stress expands to life outside the workplace, impacting employees' social and home lives. In a recent study, job stress was found to negatively predict job satisfaction among teachers and professors (Chen, 2016). The roles of educators and library staff both frequently include instructional duties, support services, and management of information or resources on others' behalf. Though organizational environments, duties, and stressors differ across professions, when burnout impacts a person's homelife, the process is referred to as "spillover" (Maslach, 2016).

Recent studies suggest that participation in passive or active arts activities can help to mitigate negative workplace effects, such as stress, on wellbeing. Library professionals are not specifically represented in this literature. Regardless, the studies show that both individual and group-based arts activities are used to promote wellness across a range of industries, indicating that they have the potential to benefit employees at libraries. Some studies refer specifically to art therapy activities, "art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship," while others refer to more informal participation (American Art Therapy Association, 2022).

Creative arts therapy (CAT) uses visual, musical, physical, and written forms of art to increase resilience and decrease the effects of work stress. In a 12-week clinical trial of 20 healthcare professionals, group-based CAT activities helped to decrease burnout and increase perceived social support among participants (Mantelli et al., 2023). A 2017 study of hospice workers also focused on group-based art therapy activities, such as viewing and discussing artwork, creating visual art, and discussing other participants' artwork. The activities were found to support creativity, increase communication, and provide some reduction of stress among several participants (Huet, 2017). A 2010 study of 60 health care workers showed that group-based art therapy activities, including collage, drawing, painting, and creative journaling decreased stress, improved communication and collaboration, and reduced anxiety (Visnola, 2010).

Arts-based interventions can also include individual activities that promote wellness in the workplace. In a 2019 study of 14 technology employees, coloring mandalas for 15-30 minutes allowed 79% of participants to detach from work during the activity, 21% to effectively think through work problems, 50% to clear their minds and "reset," and 27.3% to feel less stressed (Peters, 2019). A 2017 pilot study showed that solitary arts interventions, including painting and drawing, helped employees to "externalize their stress and identify proactive ways to reduce uncomfortable feelings," as well as boost feelings of confidence and control (Winlaw and Leotta, 2017, pg. 64). Passive arts engagement activities can also support employee wellness and displaying art in the workplace can help allow employees to incorporate art as their individual schedules allow. A recent study of 19 non-profit employees found that displaying workplace art "promotes social interactions, generally enhances the workplace environment, elicits emotional responses, facilitates personal connection-making and fosters learning" (Smiraglia, 2014, pg. 287).

Assessment and Results

I first considered the potential to bring arts to the library as an activity for employees after attending the Employee Wellness Institute (EWI) in fall 2022. This program is offered by East Carolina University to promote wellness across many aspects of life via discussions, reflections, presentations, and activities. One of these activities was an arts-based workshop in which my cohort painted flowerpots to give to friends or coworkers while discussing what it meant to "grow our social garden."

Several months later, I presented a very similar program to my coworkers at our annual Academic Library Services' (ALS) Staff Development Day. The theme for our annual event was "Team Building in the Library," so this activity tied in well. My coworkers and I enjoyed the social, creative session and I felt inspired to provide similar opportunities to use my love for the arts to boost community, social, and individual wellness.

Shortly after the presentation, I created a "Craft Circle" with my coworkers to provide more opportunities for connection, expression, and the development of new skills in a relaxed and supportive environment. This informal club is open to everyone in ALS and usually occurs once per month for an hour. Previous activities have included watercolor painting, crochet, booklet-making, rock painting, faux stained glass, and ornament decorating.

There are currently over 20 ALS members on the Craft Circle mailing list, and I send monthly email updates to promote the next craft and meeting date. Additionally, every few months, I remind all ALS members (about 100 faculty and staff) of upcoming events to give new participants the opportunity to join the group. In addition to learning crafts during meetings, members suggest new crafts or lead the group in activities in which they have experience.

In May 2024, about a year after beginning Craft Circle, I created a brief, anonymous, informal assessment, which I sent to all ALS staff.

ALS Arts Activities Informal Assessment

1. Which of the following events have you participated in?
   - Staff development arts-based breakout activity
   - "Drum Paint Club" meetings*
2. Please mark each statement that applies to your experience at the event(s).
   - Working on an art/craft project alongside my coworkers provided a positive social opportunity.
   - I felt encouraged to use my creativity.
   - I learned a new skill or technique.
   - I was able to share encouragement or my own skills with others.
3. Which of the following would you be interested in participating in?
   - Additional professional development sessions with creative arts activities.
   - Additional Paint Club* meetings and activities.
4. Do you have other suggestions or feedback?

"Paint Club" was the original name for Craft Circle.

I received nine responses, and considering that there were 20 members of Craft Circle, this means that about 45% of the members' views were represented. The data shows that six individuals (66.7%) indicated they had attended a Craft Circle meeting while three individuals (33.3%) had attended a staff development arts-based breakout activity. All nine participants (100%) agreed with the statements: "Working on an art/craft project alongside my coworkers provided a positive social opportunity;" "I felt encouraged to use my creativity;" and "I was able to share encouragement or my own skills with others."

Most respondents (six, or 66.7%) agreed with the statement "I learned a new skill or technique," while two individuals (22.22%) disagreed and one person (11.11%) neither agreed nor disagreed. When asked about future events, all nine respondents (100%) indicated they would be interested in additional professional development sessions with creative arts activities and seven individuals (77.78%) would be interested in additional Craft Circle meetings and activities.

Three individuals (33.33%) gave additional feedback, including complimenting the activities, suggesting further promotion of the club, or expressing enjoyment of time spent with coworkers. One respondent shared, "I enjoy the creative activities because they are guided, and I am not especially creative," which suggests the project templates and examples are helpful. Another respondent suggested "more promotion of 'Paint Club,' I heard about it once or twice and had no idea about how to join in," and this comment indicates a need for increased communication about meetings. A third individual commented, "I really enjoyed the time spent with colleagues working on something outside of our usual scope of work. Something pleasantly productive but not detrimental to the formal operations of the library! I really hope this continues!" This response indicates social value in the programs and suggests they have not been distracting.

Although respondents were self-selected, the informal assessment indicates interest in continued arts activities for staff, including professional development opportunities and Craft Circle meetings. Furthermore, all respondents (100%) felt the activities were positive social opportunities that facilitated relationships with others. While this was simply an informal assessment rather than a rigorous research study, these findings suggest that participants find meaning and enjoyment in the opportunity to work on creative projects together at least as much as they find the sessions helpful for learning new skills.

The craft programs are intended to promote an enjoyable, inclusive co-working environment in which participants can share and celebrate their creative skills and find a new outlet for social well-being. These programs provide opportunities to support one another's creative efforts, to practice mindfulness while making art, and to try new materials and techniques in a safe place. Because these considerations are at the forefront of the arts activities I plan, I am much less concerned with the development or refinement of art skills, though responses indicate most participants felt they experienced at least some growth in that respect.

Tips for Planning Similar Programs

When planning activities for employees, it is important to consider the overall objective, difficulty, materials, and time to set up, work, and clean up. An objective could be related to professional goals, mental health, collaboration, or social health. Planners may choose to repurpose an activity by changing the objective. For example, participants at a staff development session may use collage techniques and images to create a "vision board." The same materials and techniques could be used to create personalized retirement cards for a coworker. Aim for objectives that encourage some type of creative thinking or sharing as a group without assigning importance to 100% completion or mastering a technique.

In terms of project difficulty, planners may find it helpful to acknowledge they do not intend to teach art techniques at a high level. By keeping this mindset, they may select projects that do not require a significant investment of time from participants or expertise from themselves. The projects completed at ALS do not require prior art experience, nor a particular level of expertise. However, options are usually provided for increasing the difficulty level or complexity of the project. For example, simple crochet instructions can be provided as an option for beginners alongside instructions for a more advanced design that will appeal to an experienced crocheter. To make projects as accessible as possible, planners may provide an example of a completed project, brief written instructions, and verbal instructions. It is also helpful to offer templates as options when possible. Many individuals feel more certain of their ability to complete a craft project if given the option to trace or complete an existing design.

When selecting materials, planners may prioritize low-cost options that are easy to clean up. For example, if participants will be painting an object, craft acrylic paint is best. This type of paint is cheaper than artists' acrylic paint, is much easier to clean up than oil paint, and does not create lingering fumes like latex paint. There are typically paints and other materials left over after each activity, which I add to a supply cart. Some items, such as paintbrushes, can be reused for a very long time and other items, such as glue and paint, usually last long enough to be used for two or more programs. Leftover items can inspire new activities that do not require purchasing additional materials.

It is practical to prepare materials for projects ahead of time by priming surfaces, laying out supplies at each seat, pre-cutting paper, or completing other steps that will help participants move through the activity quickly and easily. For me, this is a necessary step when participants have between twenty minutes and an hour to work on activities. Participants usually work for the entirety of the planned time, so I tend to give reminders about time throughout the activity and to allot ten to fifteen minutes for cleanup at the end.

Planners should ask other employees for help cleaning and setting up, which makes it easier to facilitate activities and creates an opportunity for others to support programs. Seek out others' skills and experience to give them a chance to lead groups and share their skills. Giving others a turn to teach a skill also gives the primary facilitator a break from planning activities for monthly Craft Circle meetings. Sometimes, Craft Circle works on the same craft for consecutive sessions to give others a chance to try the project or to allow participants more time to work.

I intentionally chose lunch time for Craft Circle sessions because this allows employees to join in during their lunch breaks, so they do not need to take additional time off work. I also encourage employees to bring their lunches to Craft Circle if they would like to. When planning arts programs that are not considered professional development opportunities, I recommend scheduling the sessions to coincide with logical break times. This attention to scheduling may increase participation.

The Informal Craft Circle sessions are useful in gauging interest in arts-based professional development opportunities and provide an informal test group to help identify potential challenges and solutions for more formal sessions. Optional lunchtime meetups are a low-pressure means of offering employees a chance to work on creative projects that can enhance personal as well as workplace community wellbeing. Reminders about events can be sent to all staff via email or message boards and photos of employees' completed projects can help build interest in future craft sessions. For selected project ideas, please refer to Appendix A.

Potential Future Research

Many of the observations included here focus on how arts-based activities promote employees' physical and emotional wellbeing via creative activities that decrease stress or facilitate mindful thinking. Future research may expand to better address the impact of arts on community, social, and organizational health. For example, it may include discussions of how crafting together promotes group unity and how arts activities can improve creative skills that translate into workplace solutions. Furthermore, the body of literature on this topic greatly lacks sufficient information and examples of arts-based activities for employees from a professional development, as opposed to a mental health or art therapy, perspective.

Evener (2015) asserts that a "key element of innovation is a library culture that cultivates creativity, encouraging employees to stretch their abilities, experiment with new ways of doing things, and accept and even celebrate mistakes" (p. 301). Additional research on arts activities at ALS can address how this new creative programming impacts employees and reveal shortcomings and limitations. Future research may include surveys or interviews with a broader sampling of staff. These methods may address the effectiveness of project-specific outcomes, such as whether a coloring project helps employees improve focus. Further surveys or interviews may also address more general, longer-term outcomes, such as whether participating in monthly creative activities with co-workers boosts feelings of staff unity.

North Carolina Library Association

Appendix A:
Example Employee Arts Activities

Project 1: Envision Change with Vision Boards

1. **Objective:** Use collage to create a visual representation of work or personal goal(s)
2. **Time:** 30 minutes
3. **Materials:**
   - Canvas, poster board, or cardstock
   - Images from magazines or picture books
   - Scissors
   - Glue sticks (suggested in place of school glue to minimize clean up)
4. **Preparation tips:**
   - Cut out several images ahead of time to reduce time (and vacuuming)
   - Offer different colors of poster board/canvas/ etc.
   - Plan 10 minutes at the end for optional sharing

Project 2:
Growing Our Social Garden

1. **Objective:** Paint a flowerpot and add a succulent as a gift for a coworker
2. **Time:** 1 hour
3. **Materials:**
    *   Terracotta pots
    *   Acrylic paint
    *   Paint brushes and paper plates (to use as pallets)
    *   Cups of water
    *   Soil/succulents (optional)
4. **Preparation tips:**
    *   Bring 1-2 hairdryers to speed up the activity.
    *   Spray paint pots white before the event to prime them.
    *   Offer stickers or die cut shapes as for tracing templates, remind participants that simple designs like stripes or polka dots are an option.

Project 3:
Rock-Painting Mindful Mandalas

1. **Objective:** Practice mindfulness while painting patterns on rocks
2. **Time:** 1 hour
3. **Materials:**
    *   Smooth rocks
    *   Acrylic paint
    *   Paint brushes and paper plates (to use as pallets)
    *   Cups of water
5. **Preparation tips**:
    *   Paint the top of some rocks a solid base color to provide interesting options.
    *   Demonstrate using end (not bristles) of paintbrush to make the dots, starting at center and moving outward to edge of rock.
    *   Encourage participants to practice mindfulness by focusing on creating a pattern instead of worrying about daily stressors or the final appearance of the project.

http://www.nclaonline.org/

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Ray Nichols Moore 1914 – 1975

In the spring issue of 1975, Volume 33 Number 1, editor Herbert Poole expresses sorrow at the loss of longtime librarian Ray Moore. Ms. Moore had a 42-year career as a librarian, including 21 years as the librarian of the Stanford L. Warren Public Library in Durham and 9 years as assistant director of the Durham County Library System. Learn more about the expansion of library services under Moore at the History of the Durham County Library and The History of the Stanford L. Warren Library webpages.

Ray Moore also served on the editorial board of *North Carolina Libraries* and was chair of the Intellectual Freedom committee for 1974-1975. After her death, the North Carolina Library Association's executive committee authorized the establishment of the Ray Moore Award to recognize the best article on public librarianship published in *North Carolina Libraries*. The Ray Moore Award is presented at each Biennial Conference of the North Carolina Library Association. Find recent winners online at https://www.ncl.ecu.edu/index.php/NCL/Moore_Award.

Dear Reader

Ray Moore is dead. She passed away during the evening of March 23rd following an illness of several weeks. Our sense of loss is profound, and the sadness of knowing we will not see her again in this life evokes long moments of silence.

Ray was a native of Georgia, the youngest of twelve children. She attended high school in Chattanooga and graduated from Spelman College in Atlanta in 1930. Fifteen years later she graduated from North Carolina College (where her husband served as Dean of the School of Library Science) with a library degree.

Ray's career as a librarian spanned forty-two years. She served as a teacher librarian in the public schools of Chattanooga County, Georgia, as well as in the city schools of Concord and Durham, North Carolina. In 1945, she became the librarian of the Stanford L. Warren Public Library in Durham, a position which she held until 1966 and her appointment to the assistant directorship of the Durham County Library System.

Ray was active within her profession not only as an administrator, but also as a diligent and able committee person, as a contributor to the professional literature, and as a dedicated and loyal member of the editorial board of *North Carolina Libraries*. Unfortunately for all of us, fate would require her loved and loving spirit elsewhere, just at the zenith of her career. Perhaps it is best, as Robert Ingersoll observed, just at the height of one's morning when the flower of success is in fullest bloom to crash upon the unseen rocks and sink beneath the waves of the farther shore.

As a proper and lasting tribute to Ray, the North Carolina Library Association has authorized *North Carolina Libraries* to solicit the general membership for contributions which will be used to establish an annual writing competition known as the Ray Moore Award for the best article on public libraries submitted to your journal for publication. Each gift to such a fund is tax-deductible. NCLA will appoint a panel to judge the contest. Within a few days each of you will receive an invitation to help NCLA, *North Carolina Libraries*, and yourself by assisting with a lasting memorial to a North Carolina librarian whom history should record as a great lady.

Those of us who knew Ray loved her. Please help preserve her memory.

North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum
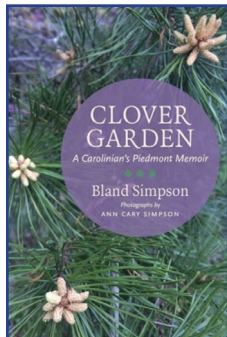
Clover Garden: A Carolinian's Piedmont Memoir

Bland Simpson is, among other things, the Kenan Distinguished Professor of English and Creative Writing at UNC-Chapel Hill. He is also a long-time member of the Red Clay Ramblers, one of North Carolina's premier string bands. For most, though, he is a writer. His canon covers fiction, non-fiction, history, mystery, and environmental odes to North Carolina's vast natural resources. For many he embodies North Carolina and has won multiple awards that add to his reputation, including becoming a member of the NC Literary Hall of Fame.

Simpson is known for stories about his upbringing in coastal North Carolina. In his new book, *Clover Garden*, Simpson invites his readers to learn about Clover Garden, a community situated a few miles west of Chapel Hill. Clover Garden is real, and if Simpson is to be believed (as he should be), his neighbors are an entertaining bunch. What makes this memoir really jump off the page is how Simpson turns the natural beauty of his surroundings into the main character. This is not just a memoir, but something that the author calls "a great wonder in my life" (p. 5). In a time of constant movement for many people, Simpson has managed to establish deep roots in Clover Garden. Over the course of the book, we are privy to over fifty years of life and growth on his property. Although to hear Simpson tell it, it took some getting acclimatized to his new home and neighbors throughout the area.

Finding himself ensconced in the wilds between Chapel Hill and Burlington, Simpson set out to make Clover Garden his home. Reading about his journey to improve his home and lands over the following decades brings the reader on an excursion that is nostalgic for many who grew up in rural areas of the state. Simpson does a masterful job retelling the stories of how he negotiated with a surly neighbor over land rights (p. 41) alongside his tales of Bravo's Market being saved from closing during the pandemic by a word-of-mouth campaign to keep the store solvent (p. 58).

Clover Garden is full of stories that are intimately familiar to anyone who has grown up in a rural area. From local character Eben Merrit, whose Merrit's Service Station was the spot for local gossip and a great place to get the car fixed, to the town of Saxapahaw, a forgotten mill town that has transformed itself into a thriving arts and culture center that as Simpson writes "the old mill village had become a destination for bicyclists, homeopathic therapy seekers… all in a twenty-first-century version of what the 1970s back to landers could not achieve" (p. 128).

This is a great book for those who are interested in local lore and reminiscing about the "good ole days." It is packed full of the characters and places that make North Carolina an interesting place to call home. Simpson is one of those authors who manages to grab the reader's attention. Although this is primarily marketed toward his long-term fans, readers from high school and college would benefit from Simpson's deft descriptions of his world. Public libraries would do well to purchase this as it has broad appeal to North Carolina residents as well as casual readers of non-fiction and memoirs.

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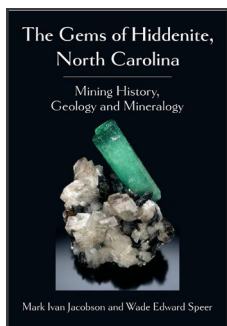
The Gems of Hiddenite, North Carolina: Mining History, Geology and Mineralogy

Mark I. Jacobson and Wade E. Speer
Jefferson, NC: McFarland &
Company, Inc., 2021.
217 pp. $39.95.
ISBN: 978-1-4766-8469-7

Hiddenite, a rare emerald-green gem, is the focus of this work and is considered "the mineralogical claim to fame of Alexander County." Hiddenite is found only in Alexander County in North Carolina.

George Washington Warren recalled finding "green bolts," as the local people referred to the gems, while working on his father's farm. He commented that he "used to chuck some of them pebbles at birds in the fields and used some of 'em in his sling shots too! Throwin' thousands of dollars worth of gems at birds! Just like a boy, ain't it" (p. 14)?

The majority of the book covers mining history in Alexander County, North Carolina, chronologically from the initial gem discovery in1875 to the present. Additionally, there are sections for Geological Setting, Species Mineralogy, and both a References List and Index. There are gorgeous photographs of minerals interspersed throughout, as well as photographs, sketches, diagrams, and newspaper advertisements that greatly add to the visual appeal. This unique compendium is enjoyable for those casually interested in shiny sparkly rocks and local history, and for those well-versed in geology and mineralogy.

Several prominent miners important to the exploration of the Hiddenite Gem Mines are featured. This is an interesting read including dramatic controversies over naming rights and discoveries, proper attribution, advertisements requesting gemstones found in fields, a fraud lawsuit, assault and murder, and tragic mining fatalities. Pointed barbs were published in the newspaper such as "science is getting too full of unmeaning jargon, born of an inordinate desire of small minds for notoriety" (p. 28).

Collaborating authors Mark Jacobson and Wade Speer both have extensive knowledge and experience in the field of geology and mineralogy. Their expertise enhances the context of the chronology. They have taken great care to compile first-hand accounts, oral histories, newspaper articles and data and to corroborate the information wherever possible and provide citations. Mark Jacobson has been a consulting editor with *Rocks and Minerals* magazine since 1984 and has written many articles. This is his fourth book and also the fourth book for Wade Speer. Most of the mineral photography included is by nationally and internationally known mineral photographers. They also purposely included historic illustrations and photographs that have not been previously published.

Those without prior knowledge of geology will need to look up some definitions to best understand the jargon used. Novice readers will enjoy learning terms such as breccia, termination face, siderite, pegmatite, rutilated quartz, and hydrothermal vein. Regardless of geological knowledge, readers will be able to understand and appreciate a majority of the work, but those with a background in geology will have a deeper comprehension of the content and the value of this unique work. This book will be a welcome addition to any academic or special library focusing on geology, mineralogy, or North Carolina mining history.

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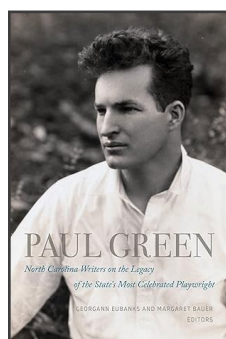
Paul Green: North Carolina Writers on the Legacy of the State's Most Celebrated Playwright

Georgann Eubanks and
Margaret Bauer, editors
Durham, NC: Blair, 2024.
154 pp. $19.95.
ISBN 9781958888230

Read in NC LIVE's HomeGrown Collection

Paul Eliot Green (1894 –1981) was a distinguished dramatist and social justice activist. The first Southern playwright to gain national and international recognition, he won the 1927 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *In Abraham's Bosom*. Green pioneered the symphonic, or outdoor historical drama, with *The Lost Colony* (1937). He collaborated with notable writers such as Richard Wright and wrote scripts for

Hollywood films, including *Cabin in the Cotton* and *State Fair*.

Despite his literary success, Green's work is not widely known today. *Paul Green: North Carolina Writers on the Legacy of the State's Most Celebrated Playwright* seeks to change that. Edited by Margaret Bauer and Georgann Eubanks of the Paul Green Foundation—established in 1982 to continue Green's legacy in the arts and human rights—this anthology aims to spark new discussions rather than serve as a biography.

Growing up on a farm in eastern North Carolina, Green witnessed the racial discrimination and inequity that profoundly shaped his later writing and activism. He used his plays to illuminate the struggles of Black Americans, Native Americans, and other marginalized groups. He was influential in both literary and social advocacy spheres, and championed causes such as the better treatment of Black prisoners and the abolition of the death penalty.

For those unfamiliar with Green's writing, the volume includes his short story "Education South," which portrays the indifference of a white college campus to the funeral of a young Black man and the suffering of his mother. Poet Philip Shabazz reflects on the story's continued relevance today.

In recent years, interest in Green's work has been rekindled, and the anthology's contributors examine this revival. Debra Kaufman discusses her adaptation of *Johnny Johnson*, an antiwar play inspired by Green's World War I experiences, for a twenty-first-century audience.

Green's portrayals of racial discrimination are complex. While he was one of the few white writers of his era to address racial and social inequities and prominently feature marginalized communities, contributors such as Kathryn Hunter Williams critique his depiction of Black characters as stereotypical and disempowered. Jim Grimsley reflects on the discomfort of reading these now anachronistic portrayals and highlights the increasingly relevant question of who has the right to tell certain stories.

This illustrated volume features essays and other contributions from North Carolina playwrights, novelists, poets, educators, actors, and activists. Collectively, they explore the impact of Green's writing, how contemporary artists have interpreted his work,

and the ongoing relevance of his efforts to confront injustice. This anthology is a valuable resource for public and academic libraries and will help inspire discussions about Green's legacy.

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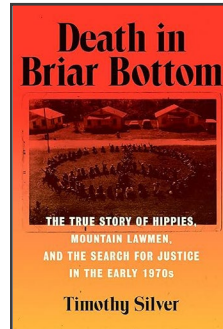
Death in Briar Bottom: The True Story of Hippies, Mountain Lawmen and the Search for Justice in the Early 1970s

Most events from the 1970s have transitioned from memory to a form of nostalgia as time has smoothed and dulled the rough edges of truth. Timothy Silver in *Death in Briar Bottom: The True Story of Hippies, Mountain Lawmen and the Search for Justice in the Early 1970s* uses interviews, newspaper accounts, and legal documents to explore a deadly confrontation between out-of-state hippies and the Yancey County Sheriff department in 1972. A group of twenty-five young Floridians on their way to a Rolling Stones concert in Charlotte made camp at the Briar Bottom Campground in Yancey County. They had been turned away from other camp areas, but were told about Briar Bottom. There they partied, set off fireworks, and were loud and disruptive. Some members who had earlier encounters with local law enforcement convinced the group to tone down their antics. Things were quiet when the police arrived.

Yancey County Sheriff Kermit Banks got a phone call earlier in the evening about the group and gathered six other deputies armed with shotguns to confront the Floridian campers. While the police were gathering the campers, there was a confrontation and a shotgun went off. Stanley Altland, one of the campers, was shot and killed. The campers were arrested for disorderly conduct. Those charges were later dropped for most of the group. No one was charged with the death of Stan Altland. Reports from

the campers and sheriff's office varied on who fired the shot that killed Altland. Banks claimed the campers had attacked him and the men he had with him. Various state and federal agencies never determined who fired the shotgun. Campers claim Sheriff Banks fired the shot. Banks claimed it was another deputy.

Timothy Silver was seventeen the summer Stan Altland was killed. Like the Floridian campers, he was a fan of the Rolling Stones and longed to go to the Charlotte concert, but his parents objected. Like most teens of that era, he questioned the values of the previous generation. Silver explores the collision of values that are exemplified in the confrontation of Altland and his Florida friends with their hippie culture and the values personified by the Yancey County Sheriff's Department. The Florida group confronted authority while Kermit Banks and the Yancey County Sherriff's Department represented it and could not see why others would not respect that authority. Fifty years after Altland's death, culture conflict about respect for authority still exists.

Death in Briar Bottom traces the events before and after the shooting of Stan Atland. Interviews, newspaper accounts, official reports, and personal reflections are used to detail the event. The footnotes detailing Silver's research are numerous. However, Silver was unable to persuade some participants, family members, and citizens of Yancey County to speak with him. Silver does use the first chapter to offer a brief personal reflection about the time of the event and an epilogue to discuss the aftermath of Atland's death.

This book is recommended to all libraries that collect items about crimes in North Carolina or the 1970's in North Carolina.

Timothy Silver is a professor emeritus of History at Appalachian State University. Silver has authored *Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains*, and along with Judkin Browning wrote *An Environmental History of the Civil War*.

Robert Arndt
UNC Pembroke
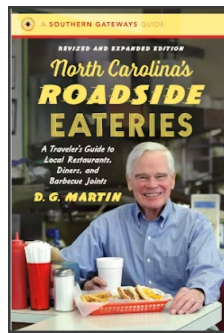
North Carolina's Roadside Eateries: A Traveler's Guide to Local Restaurants, Diners, and Barbecue Joints

Is it possible for readers to be given a tour of roadside eating attractions in North Carolina? Does North Carolina have a variety of restaurants to suit every traveler's needs? In the book, *North Carolina's Roadside Eateries: A Traveler's Guide to Local Restaurants, Diners, and Barbecue Joints*, author D.G. Martin introduces readers to a multitude of interesting restaurants to be found just off Interstate 26, Interstate 40, Interstates 73 & 74, Interstate 77, Interstate 85, and Interstate 95. For those readers unfamiliar with North Carolina barbecue, the author explains the difference between Western-style NC barbecue (vinegar & ketchup-based) versus Eastern-style North Carolina barbecue (strictly vinegar-based). At the beginning of each chapter, which features a North Carolina interstate highway, the author provides a brief description of the interstates and where they crisscross the state.

To gain some perspective into the popularity of each featured restaurant, D.G. Martin interviews the restaurant owners or includes the recommendations of his friends. Some of the restaurants included in the book have colorful names such as the following: *Moose Café* (Interstate 26), *12 Bones Smokehouse* (Interstate 40), *Soprano's Italian Restaurant* (Interstates 73 & 74), *Randy's BBQ* (Interstate 77), *Catfish Cove Seafood* (Interstate 85), and *White Swan Bar-B-Q & Fried Chicken* (Interstate 95).

D.G. Martin's book is an interesting work for all North Carolina restaurant enthusiasts as each restaurant is described in terms of local address, contact telephone number, business hours, food choices, directions to the restaurant from the highway, and local area attractions to explore after dining at the specific restaurant. If potential visitors have a GPS system in their cars, the author provides maps in each chapter with a legend placing the number on the map with a specific restaurant. To provide some context for the

popularity of the restaurant, D.G. Martin provides customer feedback and restaurant photos.

North Carolina's Roadside Eateries: A Traveler's Guide to Local Restaurants, Diners, and Barbecue Joints, is a revised and expanded edition of the author's original work published in 2016. Before writing *North Carolina's Roadside Eateries*, the author had a varied background, including serving as former host of UNC-TV's *NC Bookwatch* program (1999-2021), practicing law in Charlotte for 20 years, and serving in leadership positions at UNC Pembroke, North Carolina Central University, and the Trust for Public Land.

This book is intended to offer a glimpse into the variety of restaurants available to travelers in North Carolina who want to enjoy good food and conversation away from the busy interstates. Because of its specific scope, *North Carolina's Roadside Eateries: A Traveler's Guide to Local Restaurants, Diners, and Barbecue Joints* would be appropriate for inclusion in any public library or academic library with a focus on North Carolina popular culture.

David W. Young
University of North Carolina at Pembroke
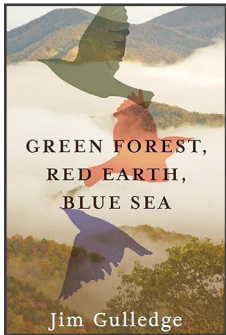
Green Forest, Red Earth, Blue Sea

Jim Gulledge
Virginia Beach, VA: Koehlerbooks, 2024.
310pp. $26.95.
ISBN 979-8-88824-390-9

Green Forest, Red, Earth, Blue Sea is Southern fiction at its finest. The book is an expansion of the author's earlier novella, *A Poor Man's Supper*, which comprises the first part of the current novel. Spanning all 3 major areas of North Carolina and multiple generations, it speaks to love lost and found, good and evil, family connections, and the fate of a small pocket watch. The author is a lifelong resident of the Carolinas who taught classes about storytelling (among others) at Pfeiffer University for many years.

The tale begins in the mountains of Saluda in

the late 1800s, when Vancie and Josiah meet and fall in love. It continues with the Elliott family in Peachland, in the Piedmont, after the Great War, and concludes with the McClure family in Beaufort in the 1970s. The characters, from young, carefree Vancie Keller to the rich and evil Dred Mabry, are detailed, beautifully drawn, and incredibly human, extremely relatable (or occasionally, relatably hateable) regardless of time and place. The landscapes are characters unto themselves, with rich descriptions that make you feel like you are there in that time and place. The descriptions of 1800s Saluda in particular are breathtaking and contribute significantly to the story. Relationships are a large focus of the story, and these are compelling and rich – both relationships between family members, lovers, and other people, as well as relationships between people and the land they live on. Gulledge's prose is lovely and draws you in within the first few sentences, not letting go until the final epilogue, and still leaving you wanting more.

Overall, *Green Forest, Red Earth, Blue Sea* is a charming book from a talented author that captures much of the history and geography of North Carolina within an enthralling story that provokes laughter, tears, and everything in between. It is highly recommended for all public libraries and academic libraries with adult Southern fiction collections or North Carolina author collections.

Lara Little
Pfeiffer University
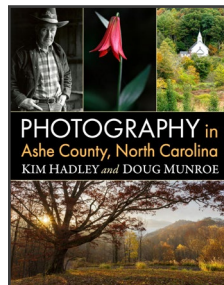
Photography in Ashe County, North Carolina

Kim Hadley and Doug Munroe
Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2024. 303 pp. $40.00.
ISBN 978-1-4766-8938-8

Kim Hadley and Doug Munroe, the authors of *Painters and Their Paintings: Ashe County, North Carolina* (2021), immerse the reader in inviting photographs and snippets of local history in their latest book, *Photography in Ashe County, North*

Carolina. This monograph showcases 388 stunning photographs taken by 76 professional and amateur photographers. The images feature historical Appalachian scenes, brilliantly hued landscapes, and the spooky abandoned buildings of yesteryear. Bright photos of Ashe County's flora and fauna are expertly juxtaposed next to beautiful antique black and white portraits and photographs of local farms and buildings.

As Hadley explains in the Preface, the authors put out a call for photographs taken within and of Ashe County, NC in 2021. The authors assembled a small team of experienced photographers to evaluate and select applicants' photographs. In the Introduction, Munroe highlights Ashe County institutions like the Catchlight Gallery in West Jefferson, an establishment that has allowed local photographers and high school photography students to display and sell their work.

Following the Introduction, the authors include a section titled "The History of Photography in Ashe County," which gives a brief overview of the history of photography in general before going on to detail more local history. This section is illustrated with 19th century daguerreotype portraits, as well as impressive images of rural landscapes, gatherings, workers, schoolchildren, and other historical scenes. The chapter ends with a few modern photographs, including a striking landscape image showing more than a dozen emergency vehicles traveling to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City.

The main section of the book is arranged alphabetically by photographer and contains a few examples of each individual's work. The wide array of subject matter includes wildlife, still lifes, antique farm equipment, architecture, and even vibrant shots of galaxies high above Ashe County. The authors also clearly included a range of both professional and amateur work. Though many photographs were shot with professional equipment, several beautiful stills were shot with ordinary iPhone cameras. The inclusion of amateur work adds to a sense of possibility that may inspire readers to take a turn behind the lens.

Alongside spectacular photographs and descriptions, each photographer's section contains their own words expressing the joy of photography, detailing their equipment, or noting their training and inspirations. The use of the photographers' own words strengthens the reader's sense of local community, authenticity, and connection.

Finally, the book includes a Glossary of Terms, Historical Image Resources for Ashe County, a Bibliography, and an Index. The Glossary of Terms will be particularly useful for students and other laypersons unfamiliar with technical terminology. For readers who would like to further their research, the Historical Image Resources for Ashe County provides specific and helpful information on where to begin.

Photography in Ashe County, North Carolina would make a great addition to high school, public, or university library collections. The variety of subject matter will appeal to many readers, including art enthusiasts, bird watchers, local historians, as well as visitors and locals across North Carolina.

Laura Bright
East Carolina University
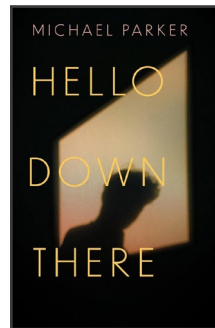
Hello Down There

Michael Parker
Durham, NC: Blair, 2024.
273pp. $17.95.
ISBN 97801-9588-8822-3

Read in NC LIVE's HomeGrown Collection

The 2024 Blair edition of *Hello Down There* marks the rerelease of Michael Parker's debut novel, originally published in 1993. Since its first release, Parker has received numerous accolades, including the Hobson Award for Arts and Letters, the North Carolina Award for Literature, the R. Hunt Parker Award, and the 2020 Thomas Wolfe Prize. He is also a three-time recipient of the O. Henry Prize. Beyond his novels, Parker's short fiction and nonfiction have been featured in esteemed publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Oxford American*. After nearly three decades teaching in the MFA Writing Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Parker joined the Warren Wilson Program for Writers in 2009, where he continues to mentor emerging authors.

Hello Down There is set in the fictional town of Trent, North Carolina, in the 1950s. The setting closely mirrors small-town life, with images of tight-knit communities and streets lined with family-owned businesses. The novel follows Edwin Keane, a wealthy young man battling addiction, and explores his relationships, both with his family and the townspeople. Among the central figures are Eureka, Edwin's love interest; her brother, Randall; and their father, Speight—a farming family forced to relocate to town after their land became too difficult to work.

Another significant character is Roy Green, the local pharmacist. Roy has a subtle hero complex, believing it is his duty to save Keane from his addiction. To this end, he deliberately delays filling Keane's prescriptions, which are delivered by the pharmacy's delivery boy, Randall. Keane's life begins to change when he ventures out of his home after months of isolation and meets Eureka. Struck by her beauty, he becomes infatuated and is determined to pursue a relationship with her. Upon learning of Randall and Eureka's sibling relationship, Keane convinces him to deliver letters and arrange secret meetings with Eureka.

Eventually, Keane decides to confront his addiction, driven by his desire to further his relationship with Eureka and his increasing difficulty in obtaining medication. Following Roy's urging, Keane agrees to seek treatment at a hospital for addicts in Kentucky. The group—composed of Keane, Eureka, Roy, and Keane's driver, Deems—embarks on the journey. The trip proves pivotal for everyone. While Keane undergoes treatment, Roy grapples with his ties to Trent and becomes obsessed with rescuing Eureka from Keane, whom he deems unworthy of her. Eureka, meanwhile, grows bored and discontented, longing for the comfort of her brother Randall. Deems, exploring Lexington independently, enjoys the city and its people but looks forward to reuniting with his family.

The novel's structure is carefully crafted, balancing a well-paced narrative with deep character exploration. The plot is believable within its historical and social context, and the setting functions almost as a character itself, shaping the lives and actions of those within it. The characters are well-developed, each with distinct motivations and emotions. Written in a third-person omniscient point of view, the novel offers insight into multiple characters' thoughts and experiences, adding to the reader's understanding of the tensions and relationships that drive the story.

Hello Down There will appeal to a wide range of readers, from students to general audiences. It would be a valuable addition to public and academic library collections, particularly those focused on North Carolina authors and settings, as it highlights the complexities of life in a specific region of the state.

Erin Gray
East Carolina University

More North Carolina Literature

Looking for more works by North Carolinians or set in our state? You can always search goodreads, LibraryThing, or the catalog of your local library. Don't forget to browse your favorite bookstore! UNCG Libraries has also created a Literary Map of North Carolina to help identify authors from your county.

If your interest in North Carolina is more general, the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill frequently updates their blog with new acquisitions to the collection and other posts related to the history, literature, and culture of our state. Connect to the NC Miscellany here.

JOEL FERDON CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS
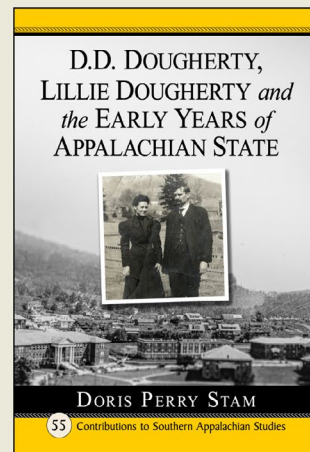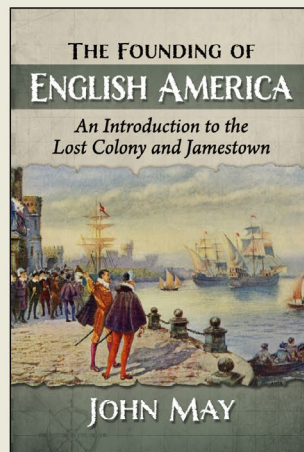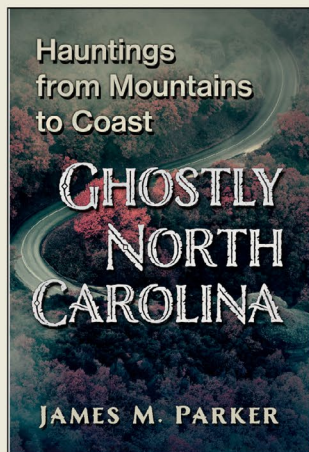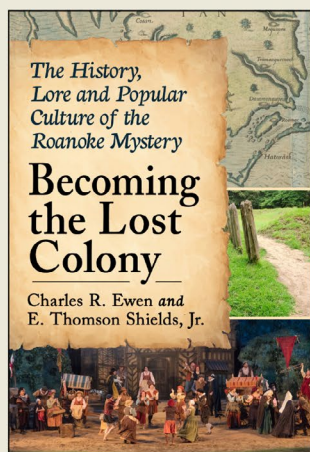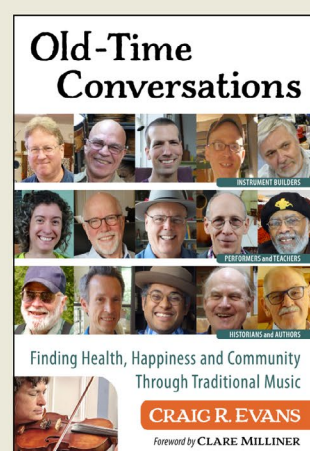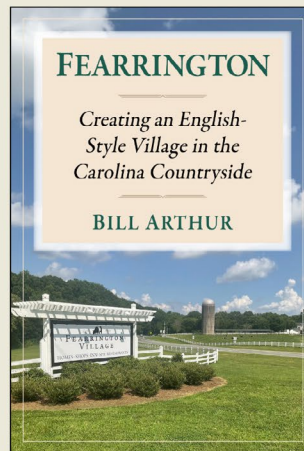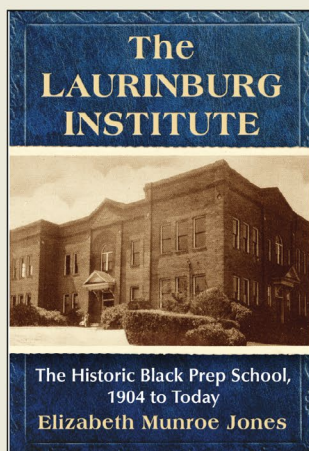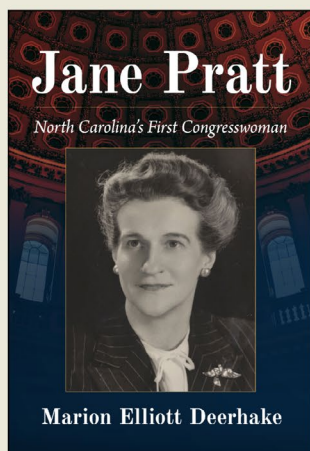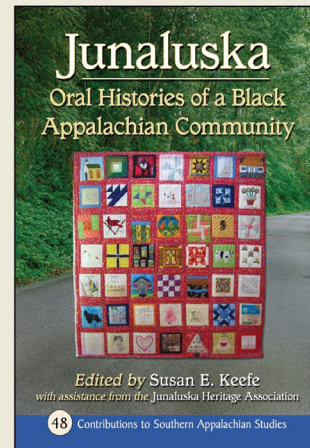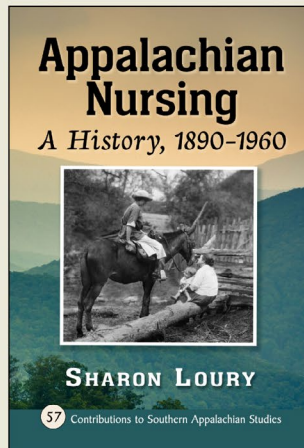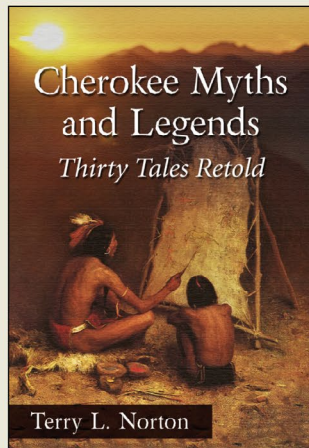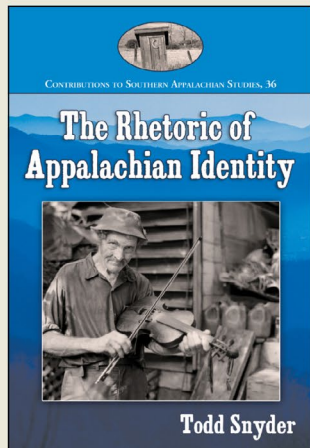
In Step with Library Leaders: NCLA's 2024 Leadership Institute

Image 1: Leadership Institute Site, the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA campus in Black Mountain, North Carolina

Driving up the steep, winding road of the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA campus in Black Mountain, North Carolina, for the first time is nothing short of breathtaking and, at the same time, a bit daunting for what lies ahead for the librarian traveler. Every other year, the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) hosts the Leadership Institute. This unique program includes an intensive four-day retreat that turns into a year-long leadership project at the participant's home library. Although established in the 90s, the Leadership Institute has gone through much change, including a lengthy hiatus, in its thirty-year tenure.

In 2012, Wanda K. Brown, then-President of NCLA, tasked Mike Crumpton, Dean of University Libraries at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, to breathe new life into the Leadership Institute by designing a program that would be both modern and sustainable. In an effort to make the Leadership Institute retreat into a unique and positively challenging experience, a home for it was found at the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA. For many librarians across the state, traveling to Black Mountain is a lengthy trek and the last winding road up the mountain solidifies their purpose—the simple act of coming together with other library folks in the hopes of learning more about what it means to be a true and authentic leader.

The 2024 Leadership Institute retreat, which took place September 10-13, 2024, was the fifth sequential retreat to take place at the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA. Twenty-four participants, six mentors, nine

Planning Committee members, and six outside library leaders came together to interact, share real life stories, and begin to hone ideas for projects that could make a systemic difference to their community. Everything from difficult conversations, to emotional intelligence, to project management, to informal leadership was discussed. What's more is that the twenty-four participants were all split into small groups and assigned a mentor who will work with them over the course of the next year to complete their project. These relationships that are planted and nurtured at the retreat truly become deep and lasting roots—important life-long relationships—that start on top of a mountain and end with library communities receiving lasting and meaningful service.

As Chair of the Leadership Institute Planning Committee, this was my last retreat to the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA. Every time that I have gone up the mountain, I have taken the lessons and applied them through the lens of the position I was holding at the time: Library Assistant, Librarian, Library Director, and, currently, Public Records Officer. What has not changed is the hero's journey for all the participants over the course of the four days. When the participants reach their revelation stage and they feel empowered by the knowledge and relationships they have gained, they feel unstoppable—librarian magic, as I call it. For many who come to the mountain, they feel burned out in their positions or by the profession—very reasonably so given the state of our librarianship—but virtually every single participant and mentor leaves rejuvenated and ready to finish their journey and start another. The projects that some participants have completed have won them Library Journal Mover & Shaker Awards, IMLS Awards, and a wide array of local commendations. What is true for everyone, though, is they are given the tools to make a difference for their libraries and in their communities, whether they can see it in the moment or not.

Luckily, a member or two of the current Leadership Institute Planning Committee will be chosen by the President and Vice President of NCLA to chair the next Leadership Institute. The next Planning Committee will be made up of the Chair and the individuals who are currently mentors. This succession planning was the brilliant idea of Mike Crumpton to allow for continuous development and improvement of the program based on current experience. Just like the hero's journey, we get to see things come full circle and a new generation of leaders step up and take the reins.

In all honesty, this was the most engaged group of leaders I have seen since my involvement with the Leadership Institute started in 2016. They were empathetic, attentive, collaborative, vulnerable, and, most importantly, they put up with my dad jokes for four days without throwing me off the side of the mountain. In all seriousness, the future is bright with these leaders. When so much in the education and library world seems a bit tarnished right now, I have hope based on the passion of these individuals. For four days on top of a mountain, they learned to work together, to trust their individual instincts, and to push the boundaries for what they can accomplish.

On September 27, 2024, just two weeks after we all came down off the mountain and returned to our homes & libraries, the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA in Black Mountain was catastrophically damaged by Hurricane Helene. Although it is uncertain at this moment in time whether the Blue Ridge Assembly will be ready to host another cadre of library leaders ready to take the next step in their journey, I know this last group of retreat-goers will think back on their experience even more fondly knowing that they narrowly missed the eye of the storm, and, instead, came away with a beautiful moment in time like something fragile encased in amber.

The journey never ends how we envisioned it at the outset. For these folks, they didn't know they would potentially be the last group of librarians to trek up a remote mountain to better themselves and others. Instead, we pay homage to the mountain and to the relationships we made there and the lessons we were given. To quote one of my fellow librarians and dear friends who I met my first journey up the mountain, "Enjoy every sandwich, friends." And I will pose the question—what is stopping you from applying to the Leadership Institute? Applications open in January 2026.

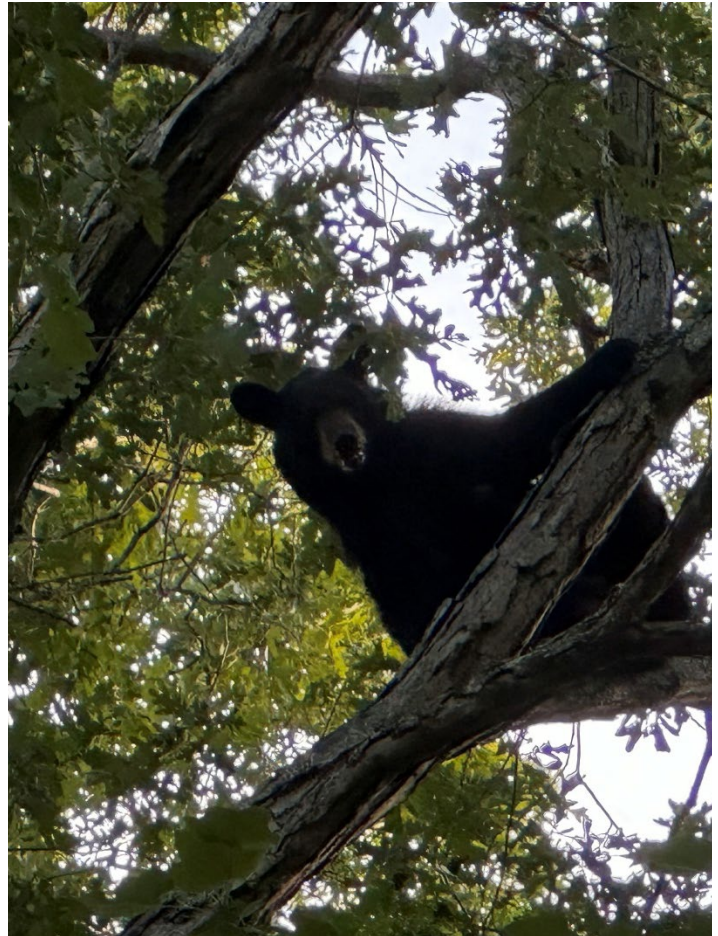Image 2: Leadership Institute Participants

Image 3: Campfire

Image 4: Visitor

NCLA
North Carolina
Library Association

ANNA MONROE-STOVER ONSLOW COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

On the Front Lines:
Providing a Place for Youth and Families

Family Storytime attendees engage in crafts and play at Swansboro Branch Library

Public libraries have become the go-to place for families looking for activities that are fun, educational, and free. This has been apparent in the library where I work in Onslow County, which has seen a dramatic increase in storytime attendance since reopening after the pandemic. Homeschooling families regularly use the library for resources, and teens use the library for volunteer hours and to meet with peers. Youth Services staff serve all of these populations, keeping in mind ages, stages of learning and individual and group needs, making the library a welcoming resource.

Over the 14 years I have spent working in Youth Services, the most important skill I have learned is to keep an open mind. Situations are not always what they seem. For instance, the family with the children who appear unkempt and unruly may be the folks who will find library programming life-changing. One storytime mom recently expressed how important the program is to her and her children because it not only provides a fun learning experience, but it also provides a sense of belonging and a chance to socialize with other families. Her daughter had just completed the last of many long sessions of physical therapy. She had some mobility difficulties, and the mom found it easier to limit the places she went with her daughter than to answer questions about her daughter's disability – or worse, face criticism from

other parents and caregivers. This mom is now one of our biggest storytime advocates and often invites other families with young children to attend with her.

The second most valuable skill I have learned is flexibility. The key is intentionally designing programming with anticipation of the needs of participants, and I tend to have more than one prepared option. When I hold family storytime, I thank my audience for coming and verbally give them the general itinerary for the day, just as I would in a program for adults. I have picture books for various ages, and I can choose what I read according to the average age of the group. If I have someone who needs an object to hold during a program, they can choose from a stack of board books or simple objects. If there is a parent or caregiver with a child who gets overstimulated in storytime, I encourage them to take a break whenever needed and rejoin the group when they are ready.

The advantage of working with elementary groups is that they can use their words to communicate with you. Last year, I decided to highlight a novel written for upper elementary readers and quickly discovered the majority of the participants were not at the level I had anticipated. Because I allowed for flexibility, I was able to have a successful program. I ended up giving a preview of the book and the characters. We discussed the power of stories, especially the ones we carry in our own names. I connected the theme of the book with various folk tales that were more on their level and did some scaffolding activities to get them interested in the book so their families could read it together when they were ready. By intentionally designing our programs with flexibility, we make our programs more accessible for participants with various abilities and needs.

A skill that goes along with flexibility and keeping an open mind is learning from young participants and incorporating the information into programming. I get to know my regular attendees, and I am constantly learning from them. Our elementary program is designed for readers and non-readers, and it tends to draw a large number of boys. In the group I presently host, almost all of the participants are homeschooled, and a few of them are neurodivergent. One day as we were playing a game, one of the boys told me that it is not important to have a win-

ner, but it is important for everyone to have a chance to finish. This was something I had not considered, but now that I know, I can make sure we allow enough time for everyone to complete activities.

When working with teens, it is important to listen and to learn, both from them and alongside them. Encourage teens to take the lead in suggesting the activities they would like to see. Perhaps they might even volunteer to lead one of their own. We had a teen who was taking a course on Japanese culture and wanted to share a slideshow she had completed. She had the experience of sharing a subject she was excited about, and her audience was engaged. By making a space for active conversation and learning, we empower our participants.

One last important thing a programmer needs to do is to take time to refresh to avoid burnout and to rekindle our enthusiasm for programming. Take a short programming pause to regroup and breathe, especially before and after Summer Reading Program. If you are questioned by participants about the break, share that you are taking a pause and will return with new and fun program ideas after the pause is over. The other part of refreshing ourselves involves professional development with colleagues. Webinars are great, but we need connection with other Youth Services staff. I would suggest attending workshops and conferences whenever possible. Meet with coworkers to exchange ideas and feedback. If you are not a part of NCLA Youth Services Section, look into joining and signing up for the listserv. When we take a time out for ourselves to refresh and return excited to share what we have learned, our program participants will catch our excitement. We communicate that the library is a place where we never stop learning or growing.

Programmers may not spend most of their time at the front desk, but we are front line workers. Programming is serving. It is challenging and requires that we continue learning and supporting each other to be able to put forth our best. By being flexible and intentional with program design, keeping an open mind, encouraging interactive dialogue and participation, we provide a space for connection and learning while increasing accessibility. We create a space of acceptance and belonging and empower those we serve.

Lagniappe *

Susan DeMarco, New Hanover County Public Library
Claire White, New Hanover County Public Library
Melissa Raymer, University of North Carolina Wilmington, UNCW Library

Read across the County: Connecting Communities through Reading

In Wilmington, North Carolina, the New Hanover County Public Library (NHCPL) has developed Read across the County (RaC), a county-wide reading initiative designed to foster meaningful connections within our community. Inspired by national programs like One Book One Community, RaC aims to bring people of different backgrounds and ages together for a shared summer of reading. In June 2021, the NHC Public Library launched this initiative in collaboration with the NHC Office of Diversity and Equity and the Friends of the Library. This initiative was inspired by a suggestion from a community member for a community book discussion.

Under the guidance of the library director the library team began by establishing clear goals that effectively convey the program's vision to supporters, peers, collaborators, and the wider community. We focused on defining what the initiative should achieve, how the library stands to benefit, and the feasibility of maintaining the initiative over time. Our collaborative efforts involved identifying the target audience's interests and needs, outlining the benefits to both the library and the community. Key components of the program include an annual theme guiding book selections and programming for diverse age groups, as well as partnerships that extend beyond the library's traditional audience.

In 2021, due to the challenges of COVID-19, our focus was on reconnecting people with nature while adhering to necessary social distancing measures. Each year's theme has been thoughtfully chosen to resonate with our community. For instance, in 2021, we celebrated nature, diversity, family, and New Hanover County's unique outdoor environment. The following year, we united our community through art and expression, followed in 2023 by fostering connections through music. In 2024, we honored Native American heritage and the importance of connecting with one's roots.

Each RaC initiative includes a central adult book and companion titles catering to various age groups. Our selection process involves the RaC committee choosing the adult title, while staff recommendations inform the selection of companion reads. We prioritize criteria such as accessibility and programming opportunities when making our selections. Our focus is on ensuring diversity, relevance to community issues, and accessibility across various formats and languages. Additionally, we assess the potential for regional significance and opportunities such as author visits to enrich community engagement.

To effectively promote the event, we developed a unique logo that appears on all promotional materials, including bookmarks and social media templates. QR codes on these items lead directly to the RaC website. We further enhance visibility through outreach via local television, radio, newsletters, and word of mouth.
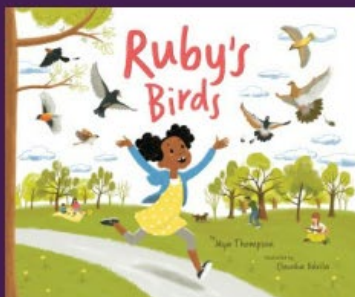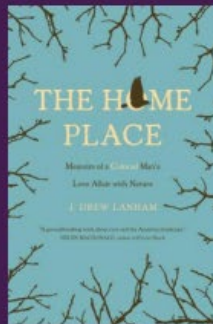
Budgeting for RaC involves collaboration with the library director, and the Friends of the Library to allocate funds for book purchases and potential author visits, whether in-person or virtual. We prioritize cost considerations up front to inform major decisions. We also consider what support community partners may provide in terms of programming.

To help identify potential partners for community-wide reading programs, the American Library Association recommends "identifying groups that might mutually benefit from the collaboration.
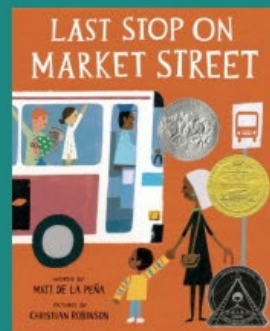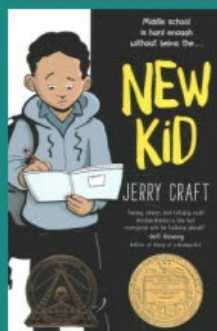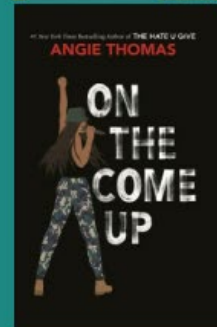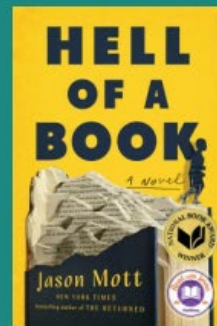
Read across the County

Read across the County aspires to bring people of different backgrounds and ages together for a community-wide summer of reading.
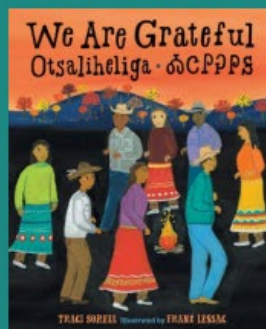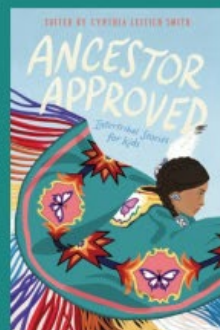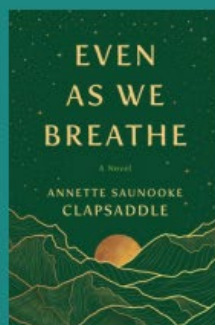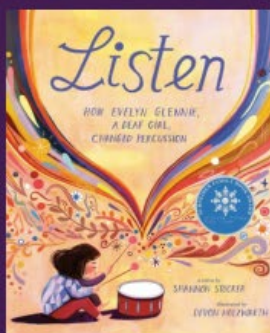
2021
Nature & Families

THE HOME PLACE
Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature
J. DREW LANHAM

the SOMEDAY BIRDS
SALLY J. PLA

Ruby's Birds

2022
Art & Expression

HELL OF A BOOK
A Novel
Jason Mott

ANGIE THOMAS
ON THE COME UP

Middle school is hard enough without being the...
NEW KID
JERRY CRAFT

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET
WRITTEN BY MATT DE LA PEÑA
PICTURES BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

2023	2024	2025
Music	**Native American Heritage**	**?**

2023 — Music

- *The Violin Conspiracy* — Brendan Slocumb
- *You, Me, and Our Heartstrings*
- *A Duet for Home* — Karina Yan Glaser
- *Listen: How Evelyn Glennie, a Deaf Girl, Changed Percussion*

2024 — Native American Heritage

- *Even As We Breathe* — Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle
- *Ancestor Approved*
- *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*

2025 — ?

Will there be a possibility of an author visit?

Is there a regional significance?

How do the themes relate to our community?

Are the titles available in different formats or languages?

Is the needed quantity available?

Are the books reasonably priced?

Consider partnerships that your library already has as well as those that your library is interested in establishing, perhaps those from a new potential user group" [11]. For NHCPL, we worked with long-time partners University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), DC Virgo Preparatory Academy, and City of Wilmington. We also established new relationships with the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra, WAVE Transit, and the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHSS), which resulted in positive outcomes for all involved. All of these groups helped distribute books throughout the community.

For years, the library had been interested in partnering with WAVE Transit Authority but wasn't sure how to make it happen. Read Across the County provided the perfect opportunity! In 2022, the

munity about the local symphony and participated in their community arts fair for children.

One of the most impactful connections made in 2023 was with the DHHS. The picture book, *Listen: How Evelyn Glennie, a Deaf Girl, Changed Percussion*, inspired library staff to collaborate with NC DHHS's Deaf and Hard of Hearing team to host a deaf-blind awareness event and storytime for children and their families. The program was led by members of the deaf-blind community, allowing participants to engage in deaf-blind simulations. Sign language interpreters and tactile interpreters were present to facilitate communication. This partnership has opened lines of communication between the library and NC DHHS, and efforts are now underway to enhance accessibility for patrons with hearing and vision impairments.

Storytime

Read aloud of Last Stop on Market Street to 2nd graders

Craft Time

Collage Art with 2nd graders inspired by Last Stop on Market Street.

Music Time

Wilmington Symphony Orchestra musician joined us for a music presentation with 3rd & 6th graders.

Give Away Time

All students took a book home!

featured picture book, *Last Stop on Market Street*, which is set on a city bus, inspired the library to host a special bilingual storytime aboard the bus. Families gathered at the library, boarded the bus, and enjoyed a delightful 15-minute ride through the downtown streets. During this time, bus staff took the chance to engage with families who don't typically use the bus and explained how the transit system works.

We formed an exciting partnership with the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra in 2023. They provided us with music based storytimes at all of our libraries and at DC Virgo ,and helped distribute books. In turn, we provided information to the com-

These collaborations have included hosting author visits, facilitating book clubs, organizing panel discussions, conducting storytimes, coordinating art activities, and more. We extend our outreach efforts to schools and summer camps, encouraging participation and utilizing these venues as lending libraries for RaC titles. Table 1 below includes the titles selected each year and sample programming offered by NHCPL and our partners.

During our community read events, we distributed surveys to gather feedback from event attendees. This process helped us and our partners make sure that our goals were met and helped identify needs

1 American Library Association. "One Book, One Community, Planning Your Community Wide Read." Last modified December 19, 2011. http://www.ala.org/tools/programming/onebook.

for future programs. For example, the author visits were the highlight of Read Across the County from a majority of the respondents. Therefore, author availability is a high priority for future selections. Here are some other feedback quotes:

- "My girls loved riding the city bus and hearing *Last Stop on Market Street* read. What a great idea!"
- "I just learned about this program this summer and look forward to reading Jason Mott's book. I loved the bus reading for children and hope you continue all these amazing efforts to grow, heal, and diversify our community. Thank you!"
- "I liked the idea of participating in the project, so the actual book and theme were secondary to that. I started with *The Violin Conspiracy* since that's the adult selection. However, now that I've learned about the theme, I've checked out the other selections and I plan on reading those books too."

- "I loved the story from a Cherokee author. She opened all our eyes to the similarities of us all--- our fears, our worries, our goals etc. Would love to read more from her."

Over the years, we have learned valuable lessons, such as the importance of involving a small group in selecting the adult title, preparing a list of suitable authors for invitations, and ensuring inclusivity across all age groups. Integrating RaC into summer reading plans, even when the theme does not align, and leveraging platforms like READSquared or Beanstack for missions further enhance engagement and accessibility. RaC continues to evolve as an initiative of community engagement through reading. Each year, we make changes and improvements to align better with our library's goals and those of our partners. We encourage other libraries to learn from our experiences and explore opportunities for offering a community-wide reading program.

Table 1

Year	Theme	Titles	Additional Programming
2021	Nature & Family	*Ruby's Birds* by Mya Thompson *The Home Place* by J. Drew Lanham *The Someday Birds* by Sally J. Pla	- Birding 101 - Outsider Art - Virtual Author visits by both Mya Thompson and Sally J. Pla - Bird crafting contest
2022	Art & Expression	*Hell of a Book* by Jason Mott *On the Come Up* by Angie Thompson *New Kid* by Jerry Craft *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña *Última Parada de la Calle Market* by Matt de la Peña	- Bilingual Storytime in the library and on a city bus - Author visit with Jason Mott - Collage art contest
2023	Music	*The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb *You, Me, and Our Heart Strings* by Melissa See *A Duet for Home* by Karina Yan Glaser	- Violin class - Wilmington Symphony Orchestra Music Storytime series - Author visit with Brendan Slocumb - Deaf Awareness Storytelling and presentation - Making noise at the library
2024	Native American Heritage	*Even As We Breathe* by Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, *Ancestor Approved; Intertribal Stories for Kids* by Cynthia Leitich Smith, *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Traci Sorell	- Film screenings of *We Will Speak* by Schon Duncan & Michael McDermit and *The Start Preservation Project: Waccamaw Siouan History* by Meredith Freeman - Cherokee 101 Conversations (Museum of the Cherokee People) *My Powerful Hair* by Carole Lindstrom Read Aloud - Storytelling with Ryan Dial (Lumbee Tribe)

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