

From the President



*“Perhaps our most important contribution is one that cannot be counted in circulation statistics or annual reports: libraries create **trust**.”*

If there is one thing librarians understand, it is that our work has never been just about books and reading. We organize collections, answer reference questions, and teach research skills, but those tasks are only part of a much larger mission. Every question at the reference desk, every storytime, every reader’s advisory conversation, and every technology class given is an opportunity to improve someone’s life.

Yet, because much of our work happens quietly, it often goes unnoticed. Success in librarianship is measured not by blaring headlines but by those quiet moments: the child who discovers a favorite book, the college student who finally finds the right source, the job seeker who submits their résumé online, the hobbyist who learns new crafting techniques, or someone new to the community who finds a welcoming place to belong. These moments rarely attract public attention, but they are the foundation of what libraries contribute to society.

In a world where information is available with a few taps on a screen, it is easy to wonder whether

libraries and librarians are still necessary. The answer is a resounding yes. Libraries remain among the most valuable institutions in our communities, and librarians continue to play an essential role in helping people learn, grow, and connect. Together, they provide opportunities that extend far beyond books.

This vital work does not happen in isolation. Through the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA), library professionals, workers, and stakeholders across public, academic, and school settings unite to advocate for the central role libraries play in the well-being and quality of life of their communities.

Today’s librarians work in an environment that is constantly changing. We are expected to be educators, technology trainers, archivists, information specialists, event planners, entertainers, grant writers, community partners, and advocates for intellectual freedom. We have to learn and adapt to new technologies while preserving access to historical collections. We help patrons navigate artificial intelligence, digital literacy, and online misinformation while continuing to celebrate the simple joy of reading.

That adaptability is one of our profession’s greatest strengths. Libraries have survived centuries of social, technological, and cultural change because our purpose has never been tied to a single format. Whether knowledge is found in a printed book, a digital archive, a makerspace, or an online database, our role remains the same: connecting people with information, ideas, and opportunities. NCLA gives library workers across the state a way to collaborate, share emerging best practices—from digital literacy to AI integration—and support one another as our roles evolve.

Perhaps our most important contribution is one that cannot be counted in circulation statistics or annual reports: libraries create **trust**. They are among the few public institutions where people

can ask questions without fear of judgment, explore unfamiliar ideas without pressure, and learn without the expectation of spending money. That trust is built every day by librarians and library workers who greet patrons with patience, empathy, and professionalism.

The challenges facing our profession are real. Budget constraints, staffing shortages and burnout, censorship efforts, and the rapid pace of technological change can make it difficult to focus on the reasons many of us entered this field. It is easy to become overwhelmed by daily demands and lose sight of the broader impact of our work. But every challenge also reminds us why libraries matter. Communities continue to need places that champion knowledge, curiosity, privacy, and equitable access to information.

As librarians, we are not merely managing collections—we are preserving democratic values. We defend the freedom to read, promote lifelong learning, and ensure that information remains accessible to everyone, regardless of age, background, or financial means. These responsibilities are not incidental to our profession; they define it.

Our work deserves to be celebrated, but it also deserves to be shared. We should tell the stories behind the statistics, explain the expertise behind our services, and remind our communities that

libraries are not passive institutions. They are active partners in education, civic life, and community well-being.

As we look ahead, the strength of North Carolina's libraries relies on the strength of our collective voice. Whether by joining an NCLA section, participating in legislative advocacy, or attending regional workshops, getting involved with NCLA ensures we continue to champion intellectual freedom, literacy, and equitable access for all.

The future of libraries will undoubtedly continue to evolve, but the heart of librarianship remains unchanged. It is found in our commitment to service, our belief in the power of knowledge, and our conviction that every person deserves the opportunity to learn. Those ideals have guided generations of librarians before us, and they will continue to guide those who come after us.

We should remember something that can be easy to forget amid busy schedules and competing priorities: *the work we do matters*. Every question answered, every program offered, every collection developed, and every patron welcomed strengthens not only our libraries but also the communities we serve. That is a legacy worth protecting—and a profession worth celebrating.



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