

From the President

Providing resource support for a highly respected women's college is a unique assignment, one to which incoming NCLA president Janet Freeman has given a great deal of thought as well as personal energy. From rotating weekends with her staff, an assignment she thoroughly enjoys because "it makes me feel like a librarian again," to the carefully planned and currently implemented decision to install an integrated on-line system not only to provide the all-female student body with the best possible resources, but to address women's well-documented computer phobia as well, this director of Meredith College's Carlyle Campbell Library has organized and developed her professional career as carefully as the collections she has overseen.

"I always knew I wanted to be a librarian, ever since I became a page," Janet says, an assignment she received as a fourth grader at Ardmore Elementary School in Winston-Salem. "Librarians were always very, very nice to me. I grew up wanting to be one of them. One of the highlights of my high school career was being allowed to file shelflist cards. I knew I was trusted when they let me drop the cards below the rod."

Even at that young age, Janet planned her professional career with care. Aware that "I needed as broad a background as I could get because librarians need to know about *everything*," she enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, entering their teacher education program because it allowed her to study "a smattering of everything."

Realizing that she needed to broaden her experiences outside of North Carolina, and desiring to study under Frances Cheney, "the great goddess of reference," Janet began her MLS at Peabody Library School in Nashville, Tennessee. And Cheney lived up to her well-deserved reputation. "I had two courses under her. She was very human, very funny; I learned so much. 'Scope, arrangement, special features'—I never look at a reference book without hearing her voice asking about these three things."

While she was at Peabody, Janet was involved in two courses and a major project which, in retrospect, were extremely important in the development of her present career. The first was her exposure to computers through two separate courses, an introductory course and an information systems course. OCLC was just being born, and the opportunity to be introduced to this profession-changing technology as a student is not lost on Freeman today.

The other academic opportunity of significance was the writing of an acquisitions program in FORTRAN, an assignment she and her fellow students completed in spite of the fact that "none of us ever thought we'd be in a position to use this." Ah, the naiveté of the student!

Even though Janet's initial inclination was to be a public librarian — "I worked in telephone reference at the Forsyth County Public Library the summer between college and library school and I thought public libraries were just perfect" — an assistantship in the reference department at Peabody during graduate school caused her to lean toward academic libraries during her first job search, a search that culminated in her acceptance of the position as reference librarian at Georgia Southwestern College for two years. The library was the James Earl Carter Library — "Jimmy's father, the peanut farmer."

After Georgia Southwestern, Janet became a technical

services librarian at Furman University for two years. Both these positions essentially were apprenticeships, part of a bigger career picture, even though she confesses that she was not fully aware of this at the time. "I just thought I should know about technical services."

The broad-based knowledge begun as an undergraduate came full circle when she was appointed director of the Wingate College Library. Her challenge during the nine years she was there was to move the library from resource support of a junior college curriculum to that of a four year, degree granting institution. It was an interesting, somewhat frightening, growth inspiring transition for Freeman.

"Wingate had a strong junior college library. Adding baccalaureate degrees forces you to look hard at collection development and what it means to support upper level courses. I sort of grew up professionally in Wingate."

Part of this "growing up" also involved, interestingly enough, living in a small town. "It was the smallest town I'd ever lived in. I had never worked with the same people I went to church with, went to the post office with. It was nurturing"

— not just for Janet, but for her staff as well. One learns to work with people really well in small towns — to do otherwise is professional and personal suicide.

And Janet took the best of the small town with her when she accepted the directorship of the Carlyle Campbell Library at Meredith College in Raleigh in 1984. Confessing that "I was ready to be in a bigger place," Janet also carefully evaluated her commitment to a single-sex institution before accepting the appointment. "I think there is an important place for single-sex education — women's education — in today's academic environment. I believe it is important for young women to have that opportunity *if they want it*. Women's colleges are places where women can assume leadership roles without men dominating. (Women will let men do this, you know.)"

This careful analysis and ability to consider and accept the individual are inherent in everything Janet undertakes. In discussing her immediate goals at Meredith, she quickly asserts that "a smooth transition into the world of library automation" is foremost. She believes that this transition is a major challenge to staffs who have used the same procedures for so long. "The key is to help people not try to transfer what they've done on paper all these years to the computer. It requires a lot of patience and flexibility" — a lot of consideration and acceptance of the individual and the group.

The same can be said for the individuals and the group that make up the North Carolina Library Association. Typically, Janet reveals, "I have no agenda as such for my presidency, although I am committed to people networking . . . talking to each other. NCLA and its executive board have a unique opportunity — to get different kinds of librarians together, talking to each other. I started out thinking that we ought to address the ALA Code of Ethics — and we may. But the more I think about it, the more I want the *Executive Board* to set that agenda. I see NCLA as a big team effort. If you're going to be part of a group — a team — be as much of a group as possible. I believe in the power of the group." And the group is fortunate to have such a thoughtful, dynamic leader as Janet Freeman, the next president of NCLA.

— Frances Bryant Bradburn

Editor's note: North Carolina Libraries wishes to use this column to introduce the president of NCLA for the 1991-1993 biennium to the membership. Ms. Freeman will begin her column with the next issue.