

From the President ...

She looked up from her lunch with a gleam in her eye. "I guess you could say my technical services experience began in the sixth grade. They let me enter books in the accession book and shellac the covers." I had just asked her how she decided to become a librarian, and now she turned serious. "I suppose this won't sound very professional to many people — and it isn't — but I was ready to leave the classroom."

Thus Gwen Jackson, new NCLA president, recounted the varied paths of her career. As a high school science teacher in Wilson, she found herself drawn more and more into the media center. "Throughout my teaching career, I had been exposed to really good librarians, and I was fascinated to see how they chose resources for students. It gradually dawned on me how much I'd like to do that. And, frankly, although I loved the classroom, I was growing tired of the extras — building homecoming floats, decorating for junior/senior proms, writing transcripts. All those things were fine until Rebecca was born. Suddenly I wanted fewer after-school responsibilities. I needed time with my family as well as a career."

With Gwen's usual practicality and efficiency, she found a way to do that in spite of the fact that she was going to have to go back to school to get her master's degree in library science. She chose East Carolina University. "Well, I've always thought of that degree as on-the-job-training," she confesses. The Wilson Schools immediately hired her as librarian at Barnes Primary School; therefore, she was able to relate most of her coursework to both her job and her family. "When I took children's literature, I read everything I could to Rebecca. When I took storytelling, she was my first audience. I knew if she sat still, everyone else would, too. And since I was in a primary school, I could relate easier to Rebecca and her development."

When asked what worried her most as she began this new career, a mischievous smile played across her face. "I was afraid I'd

step on those little folks and crush them. I was accustomed to looking eyeball to eyeball with students."

She finished ECU in two years, taking one course each semester and full loads during all summer sessions, and continued as an elementary school librarian for ten and one-half years. In 1984, North Carolina was putting Media and Technology consultants in the regional centers, and Gwen was ready for another change. She applied to be the Media and Technology Coordinator for the Southeast Regional Education Center. "While I really liked being an elementary school librarian, I asked myself what I would like to be doing in ten years. I decided that I would probably like different challenges then."

And the challenges have been enormous. Even though she started out as a consultant for school media programs, she is now an instructional specialist, part of the State Department of Public Instruction's consolidation, and reorganization to Technical Assistant Centers. While the shift has been unsettling at times, Gwen admits to many positives. "Becoming an instructional specialist has opened classroom and curriculum doors not opened before. Now I am able to work with teachers and can show them how resource-based instruction has an important place in their curriculum." Actually it has allowed her to bring the three roles of the school library media specialist together

just as we theorize in *Information Power*, AASL's national standards. "Those three roles: the teacher, the information specialist, the instructional consultant — *that* is the essence of my job," she explains.

Melding this complicated, time-consuming career with her responsibility as NCLA president will not be easy, even for someone as energetic and efficient as Gwen. But she looks forward to the biennium with characteristic enthusiasm. "So many good things began over the past two years. We need to continue those and look for more ways to network — to look for ways we can work together across types of libraries."

Much of this is an access issue, she believes. "I learned early to appreciate access," she confides. "The public library in Stanley County let me check out anything from anywhere. Of course, they were only books, but they didn't limit me to the children's collection. Today we are seeing collections growing from print to multimedia to the wide access of information — sort of from the buggy to the moon, as my father described the changes in transportation during his lifetime. Resources are just more global today, so sharing is important."

Gwen goes on to say that she sees the Association's role as one of helping to break down barriers between types of libraries and to work around perceived turfdom. She believes that we in North Carolina librarianship have the opportunity to be library professionals — not simply school librarians or public librarians or academic librarians — but "a whole lot of library professionals accessing a whole lot of information for a whole state." The next two years will be pivotal for libraries and librarianship in both the state and nation. NCLA President Gwen Jackson is determined that the Association will be an asset — yes, a facilitator — to the state's library community as society determines the face of information access for years to come.

— Frances Bryant Bradburn
Editor



A plethora of presidents. Janet Freeman (Immediate Past President of NCLA), Marilyn Miller (Immediate Past President of ALA), Hardy Franklin (President of ALA), and Gwen Jackson (President of NCLA) gather at the 50th Anniversary Conference of the North Carolina Library Association in Winston-Salem.