

Retrospection: The First Hundred Years of North Carolina's Libraries ~1960~

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This fifth in a series of articles about North Carolina's libraries begins in 1946 before construction resumed after World War II. During the next fifteen years, new library buildings and renovations were completed at a pace never before seen in North Carolina, which allowed libraries to offer new services to meet the demands of more library users. A self-survey of libraries in the nine southeastern states looked at the good and bad in libraries in 1946-1947 and found that State Aid to Public Libraries, which began in 1941, was part of the reason that a larger percent of North Carolina's population had access to libraries than in any of the other states surveyed.¹



Greensboro's First Baptist Church Library became part a new innovation in special libraries in 1952 when it occupied an 800-square-foot room near the sanctuary of the \$1.2 million church.²

In 1954, *North Carolina Libraries* recognized NCLA's Golden Anniversary with the publication of historical articles about libraries in North Carolina and NCLA founders were honored by the Durham High School Library Club.³

Public Libraries

Marjorie Beal, Secretary and Director of the North Carolina Library Commission, said of the findings of the survey of libraries in the Southeast: "North Carolina has a good spread of county and public library services, now is needed an enrichment of that service."⁴ Among the enrichments needed were additional trained

librarians, better book collections and buildings, additional services, and bookmobiles for every county. Library service for Negroes was showing progress by the late 1940s with increased support from State Aid to Public Libraries, the demand for more books from the readers, and the appointment of a part-time Negro Supervisor of Rural Libraries in 1946.⁶ By 1950, North Carolina had more bookmobiles than any other state, but there was still a shortage of trained personnel to staff the trucks and book collections needed to be improved.⁷

Public Library Statistics

	1947	1960
Population	3,215,710*	4,531,834**
Volumes	1,488,411	3,679,531
Bookmobiles	71†	106††
Current Income	1,214,098.40	3,363,771.98
Per Capita Income	.38	.74 ⁸
<small>* 1940 ** 1960 projected † serving 81 counties †† serving 94 counties</small>		

In an effort to improve library services, the Governor's Study Commission appointed in 1953 recommended the merger of the State Library and the North Carolina Library Commission, which was effective July 1, 1956. With the merger, the first issue of the *Biennial Report of the North Carolina State Library* replaced the *Report of the North Carolina Library Commission*. The State Library was charged with two major functions: 1) providing library service to state officials and agencies and to citizens through a network of public libraries and 2) overseeing library development throughout the state.⁹

The year 1956 was an important time for North Carolina public libraries with the reorganization of the State Library, which became a depository for North Carolina state documents and began to loan films to local libraries that wanted to schedule film



Photo by Harold Moore⁵

Left to right: Dr. J.P. Breedlove, NCLA Founder and former Duke University librarian; Miss Florine Lewter, first director of Durham City School libraries; Miss Clara Crawford, librarian of the Durham Public Library for the past 32 years; Dr. Louis R. Wilson, NCLA Founder and former University of North Carolina librarian; and Mrs. Lillian B. Griggs, formerly librarian of the Durham Public Library, Secretary and Director of the North Carolina Library Commission, and Woman's College of Duke University librarian. Mrs. Griggs died less than a month after the picture was made.

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State Library Building ¹¹

programs.¹⁰ In 1957, the State Library partnered with the UNC library school to present the first workshop in the nation on the new ALA public library standards that had been published in 1956.¹²

Library facilities increased in quality and quantity in the 1950s. By 1958, 67 towns had new or improved library facilities, 44 of which had been designed as libraries.¹³ Construction for public libraries included the following:

1950

New buildings were opened at Scotland County, Benson, Biscoe, and Swan Quarter; additions to libraries were made in Southern Pines, Smithfield; and Northampton County. Raleigh's Richard B. Harrison Library and the Robersonville library moved into renovated quarters.¹⁴

1952-1953

New library buildings occupied in 1952-1953 included Washington's George H. and Laura E. Brown Library, Cumberland County, Rowan County in Salisbury, Faith, Asheboro's Randolph Negro Branch, Onslow County, Robbinsville, Hillsborough's Orange County Negro Public Library, and Belhaven Public Library. Additions and renovations were completed at Rockingham County, Asheville's Pack Memorial, Warren County, Anson County, and Wadesboro. Asheville's new Haywood Road Branch, which opened in June 1953, was the first branch library to open in a building constructed as a library and had the first electric charging machine. The local newspaper described Winston-Salem's new public library as a dream come true when it opened in March 1953. The Randleman Public Library moved into permanent quarters in October 1953 after being housed in several temporary locations.¹⁵ Programs featuring music became a new library service throughout the state, and in 1953 the library in Kinston installed the first high-fidelity system in any public library in North Carolina.¹⁶

1954

By 1954, libraries were cooperating with community organizations to expand library services in towns and in special areas like hospitals and prisons. Burlington's May Memorial

Library opened a new Children's and Young People's Department in November 1954. Several libraries moved into new quarters in 1954: Union County in Monroe, Davie County in Mocksville, East Winston Branch in Winston-Salem, High Point, Farmville, Canton, and Haywood Road Branch in Asheville.¹⁷

1955

The following libraries opened during 1955: Caswell County Confederate Memorial Library in Yanceyville, Dallas Public in Gaston County, Fayetteville's Gillespie Street Branch, Iredell County, Surry County in Dobson, China Grove in Rowan County, and Edgecombe Memorial in Tarboro.¹⁸

1956-1958

The following libraries were opened between 1956 and 1958: Caldwell County, Pilot Mountain, Thomasville, Lincoln Heights in Laurinburg, Washington County in Plymouth, Bridger Memorial in Bladenboro, Harnett County in Lillington, Transylvania County in Brevard, Swannanoa, Pilot Mountain, Spruce Pine, and Chapel Hill. Branches were opened in Angier, Apex, Creedmoor, Currituck, East Laurinburg, Hatteras, Havelock, Kernersville, Lucama, Stantonsburg, Newport, and Avery County.¹⁹

1959-1960

Libraries that opened in 1959-1960 included Gaston County (main library and five branches), Alleghany County, Haywood County, Burgaw, Carthage, Columbia, Denton, Dunn, Gibsonville, Rockingham, Spindale, Yadkinville, Bladenboro, Williamston, Grifton, Columbus County, North Asheville Branch, High Point's Washington Street Branch, and McGirt's Road Branch in Laurinburg.²⁰

The federal Library Services Act, which was introduced on the House Floor by NC Representative Graham Barden and signed into law on June 19, 1956, provided money for libraries in each state for five years. The North Carolina Plan included ways to provide library services to rural and small-town citizens and to the six counties that did not have library service.²¹ This federal funding resulted in tremendous growth for developing library systems.

School Libraries

The Superintendent of Public Instruction's Biennial Report from 1946-1948 through 1950-1952 included the same introductory paragraph on school libraries:

School libraries continue to grow in number, size, and usefulness. The philosophy of library service is rapidly changing to include not only books but also audio-visual materials, thus making the libraries real materials centers. It has been the librarian's responsibility to locate needed films, recordings, filmstrips and like material, but now many libraries are housing and organizing this information, thus resulting in a closer integrated program of library service and a more enriched curriculum.²²

The need for school library personnel was crucial during the tremendous growth of libraries in the 1950s, but support for libraries continued to come only from local money or textbook

rental fees until the 1960s. Some schools met the need for library personnel by assigning library staff to work at several schools, by hiring library supervisors to work with teacher-librarians in some school systems, or by hiring librarians with funds allotted for classroom teachers. In the 1959-1961 budget request, the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the first time recommended funding for library personnel to oversee the more than five million school library books in North Carolina. Trained library personnel were encouraged to relate library materials to the curriculum, thus improving the education of all students.²³ The State Department of Public Instruction gave additional support to school library personnel with Publication No. 257, "Planning and Equipping the School Library."²⁴

**School Library Collections, Circulations,
Personnel, and Expenditures**

	1944-1945	1959-1960
Library books owned	3,197,933	6,409,323
Volumes per pupil	4.2	5.98
Total circulation	9,838,935	25,272,967
Average circulations per pupil	14.29	22.85
Personnel with some library training (full-time)	121	558
Total expenditures for school libraries	\$ 443,199.66	\$ 2,056,112.86
Average expenditures per pupil	.64	1.92 ²⁵

The 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which provided funding at all levels of public and private education, introduced a decade of tremendous growth for school libraries and media centers. This growth was evident almost immediately when expenditures for school libraries increased by approximately 20 percent from 1959 to 1960.²⁶

University and College Libraries

University and college libraries met the challenge of post-war enrollment increases with a construction boom that gave many schools new library buildings and provided space for additional services and staff. Building programs in progress in the late 1930s, which were put on hold during the war, were again in full swing by the 1950s.

1949

Duke University doubled the size of its library in 1949 with an addition to its 1930 building.²⁷

1950

Guilford College dedicated a \$100,000 library addition November 10, 1950. Greensboro College occupied the new James Addison Jones Library in the summer of 1950. Woman's College moved into a new \$1.2 million library in 1950.²⁸

1951

Libraries completed during 1951 included Pembroke, UNC Law School, and North Carolina College at Durham.²⁹

1952

The \$1.6 million addition to the main UNC library, which was dedicated April 18, 1952, was later named for Dr. Louis Round Wilson.³⁰ Other libraries completed in 1952 included Atlantic Christian College, Barber-Scotia College, Gardner-Webb, a Physics-Mathematics Library at Duke, Fayetteville State Teachers College, and Warren Wilson College at Swannanoa.³¹

1953

Western Carolina University's construction boom in the 1950s included a library building, which replaced the facility that had been in the Joyner Building since 1930.³² The new library included facilities for students and townspeople as well as a cultural center for the region. Catawba College's Corriher-Linn-Black Library opened in November 1953.³³

1954

The opening of the new \$1 million Joyner Library at East Carolina College on June 7, 1954, provided additional space for the collection and for services required by post-war enrollment increases. The Alison B. Stirling Library at Lees-McRae College opened November 1, 1954.³⁴

1955

At Mars Hill College, an anonymous donor gave money for a library with the understanding that the college would erect another building. The library opened in 1955 along with a men's dormitory.³⁵ The million-dollar Bluford Library at North Carolina A&T College opened in Greensboro in June 1955. NC State College in Raleigh dedicated the new \$1.2 million D.H. Hill Library on March 12, 1955. The Wake Forest College Library, which opened in 1955, was one of the first buildings constructed on the new campus at Winston-Salem.³⁶

Conclusion

The period from 1946 to 1960 was a time of recovery for education after World War II that saw an explosion of library buildings and services. Following the recovery period, the 1960s was a time of increased funding and growth in libraries, especially in public schools where curriculum changes placed additional responsibilities on libraries.

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- ¹⁰*North Carolina State Library First Biennial Report 1956-1958*, 12, 14.
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