

# From the President

Dave Fergusson, President

If you haven't seen it yet, take a look at NCLA's new home page on the Web. The Rockingham County Public Library is generously maintaining it for us, and the address is <http://www.rcpl.org/ncla>. Sue Cody took on this web site assignment, and by the time you have seen it, I think several of our sections and round tables will have additional home pages of their own set up and linked. Of course, if you are not a subscriber to NCLA-L, go directly to jail and do not collect \$200. Rather, send the message "subscribe ncla-l yourfirstname yourlastname" to [listserv@ils.unc.edu](mailto:listserv@ils.unc.edu).

While attendance at the NCASL Conference in High Point was below expectations, the programs and exhibits I visited were great. I enjoyed spending some time soliciting vendors for future conferences and I won a door prize at lunch. Former *Omni* magazine editor Keith Ferrell's take on the Internet, which he delivered after the lunch, was both challenging and disturbing. Ferrell decried the lack of authority and the disconnected qualities associated with much of the information our young people accept as fact off of the Net. He contrasted that with the linear progression of thought and the validity associated with material which has been judged, edited and published by a publishing house with a reputation earned over time.

The NCLA Executive Board met Wednesday, August 7, in High Point, and I want to mention two interesting outcomes. The entire board met all afternoon with facilitators Ernie Tompkins and his wife Nickol Northern-Tompkins to address the unresolved issues in the 1995 Governance Study. Ernie, who works with the City of Winston-Salem and seems to know half the librarians in the state, and Nickol, who works for the City of High Point, graciously donated their time to help us.

After much discussion, it was agreed that the Board would investigate preparing an amendment to the Constitution for a membership vote. The change would award an additional seat on the Executive Board to a section or round table reaching a certain level of membership, and would add additional seats as higher membership numbers are reached.

A motion is also being prepared for the next meeting of the Board which will charge all NCLA bodies (sections, round tables, etc.) with adopting substantial registration cost differences for members and non-member rates all at future workshops. This would affix value to membership, and in effect penalize non-members, or those not involved in the organization which provides the workshops. Draconian as it may seem, this is a common practice and expands the value of membership.

A major concern of the Association these days is its decreasing membership, especially renewals which have really declined. The Membership Committee, headed by NCLA Directors Barbara Akinwale and Jackie Beach, is working hard to address this problem, but in the meantime I thought it would be worthwhile to look at NCLA membership as it would be examined in the "private sector" — to see how the value measures up. I selected two very popular ways of spending one's money and then compared them to NCLA membership.

## Comparison of NCLA Membership to the cost of a BMW 318i convertible:

Your NCLA membership costs \$10-\$40 per year while the BMW rounds out at \$32,750. How good are opportunities to meet other people? The NCLA Conference draws 1,400 people. The 318i seats four. What does it cost for maintenance? NCLA averages \$30 dues per year. The BMW will average \$30 a day if you are lucky. NCLA is, of course, a North Carolina organization. The BM'er comes from Germany, or worse yet, South Carolina.

## Comparison of NCLA Membership to "Taste of Asia Vacation," including Singapore and Bangkok.

Again, NCLA costs about \$10-\$40 a year. The "Taste of Asia" trip costs \$1,860, double occupancy, and food is not even included! NCLA affords you the opportunity to meet 1,500-2,200 members annually. As to the vacation, how many people can you meet in nine days? The record of your years in NCLA is preserved in *North Carolina Libraries*, but your trip? Snapshots.

Any way you cut it, NCLA is a *great* deal! Don't you wonder why more people don't skip the family vacation altogether and buy everyone in the family an NCLA membership - toddlers through grandparents? The amount of money saved by belonging to NCLA is a wonder of modern America!