

From the President

Beverley Gass, President

In these sunset days as president of NCLA, the swift passing of two years astonishes me. I have been professionally energized by the responsibilities that belong to the president of NCLA so that the time has seemed very brief. In 2004, NCLA will enter its second century of service to its members. I believe that what we do in the next four years is vital in shaping what we need to be for the next 100 years. As the soon-to-be past president, I will still have the opportunity to observe closely and participate in shaping the future of the association. Let me mention briefly some issues that are of immediate importance to us.

One Unified Yet Diverse Association

The first and most important issue at this time will be the work of the NCLA Commission on School Librarians that will be in place and at work by November 1, 1999. The Commission will identify key issues vital to school librarians and school librarianship throughout North Carolina; identify remedies and resolutions to those problems that are creative, innovative, and appropriate for assuring that school librarianship remains strong and able to meet the needs of students throughout North Carolina's schools; and create an action plan that remedies and resolves key issues for school librarians with clearly established timelines and lines of responsibility. This Commission was proposed by the Executive Committee of NCLA and agreed to by the Executive Board of NCASL following a meeting with the members of the Executive Board of the North Carolina Association of School Librarians. At that meeting the Executive Board of NCASL announced their intention to form a new organization for school librarians outside of NCLA. Clearly the NCASL contingent believed that NCLA was not working for them the way it should.

One Cooperative Initiative for Licensing Library Resources

Closely related to this issue is one that now has two separate statewide

initiatives to license library resources underway. With the Public Schools of North Carolina now licensing databases for K-12 through a project called NC WISE OWL and the libraries of the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina Community College System, the Private and Independent Colleges and Universities and the public libraries cooperating through NC LIVE, we now have two parallel licensing ventures. I believe strongly that this is not in the best interest of libraries and the people of North Carolina. Surely, all libraries will have better and more equitable access to the kinds of information resources that all deserve if we were working together as one community of libraries. Although it appears that the course is set for this year, we must not allow this to become a permanent arrangement. I wonder if the appearance of NC WISE OWL is not another symptom of broken communications lines between school librarians and the rest of the library community?

Interlibrary Cooperation in North Carolina

Certainly, we have many types of libraries in this state, but we have many common issues and concerns. We must work diligently to build a continuum of library services that meets the diverse needs of all the people of North Carolina. Right now, however, there are some rifts and problems within our library community needing attention. When problems arise we have regrets that things are not going smoothly and tend to want to avoid facing the tension and discomfort surrounding the situation. But I think it may be useful that, at last, the issues are on the table and are now being openly discussed. Maybe, just maybe, we can begin to resolve any differences and heal any rifts that may exist. Where frustrations are allowed to simmer and are kept hidden, then healing is not possible.

While we have strong momentum and some history of Interlibrary Cooperation in North Carolina, it is abundantly clear that the newly developed plan prepared by the

Interlibrary Cooperation Committee of the North Carolina State Library Commission and the NCLA Commission on School Librarians provided the strength and the means for a renewing and refurbishing a cooperative environment for all types of libraries that meets all the needs of all people of North Carolina.

Cooperating for Continuing Education

Watch for more from the NCLA Continuing Education Committee. This committee has begun work that will lead to a more coordinated and visible program of continuing education for North Carolina's librarians and library staff. We have many wonderful professional development activities in place thanks to the work of the sections and roundtables of NCLA, the State Library and its implementation of the LSTA plan, the excellent library schools in the state, and the plethora library-related but institutionally sponsored workshops. The Continuing Education Committee can lead the way in making sure that all of us have a good way of knowing what is available and having programming available to meet all our needs. Their work will succeed only if done in an environment of open communication and cooperation among our diverse library community.

Being president of NCLA has been one of the wonderful professional experiences of my career. In addition to having the opportunity to work with librarians and library staff from across all types of libraries in this state, being president has given me the sense that maybe I can help make a difference. Surely, though, the difference is not one that anyone of us makes alone, but only as we work together for the cause of library services to all the people of North Carolina. I thank you for allowing me to be president of NCLA and wish that you might have similar joys and opportunities in your life. I am grateful for those of you who have served as the Executive Board of NCLA. It has been my honor to stand before you and before all the members of the North Carolina Library Association.