

## PRO: The Argument for Annual Sessions

by Robert H. May

Four out of five state library association leaders from southeastern states listed the following advantages of annual sessions:

(1) It is easier to sustain interest in a professional association when it meets at least annually, since often the momentum gained at convention time wanes as the year gets underway.

(2) An annual convention gives members the opportunity to meet, to keep in touch, and to exchange ideas regarding library programs across the state.

(3) A higher membership level can be obtained when the association meets more frequently than biennially. (Many new librarians in the state who start work between biennial conferences may wait as long as two years before joining the association.)

(4) It is easier to obtain officers, committee chairmen, and others to serve one year rather than two year terms.

(5) An annual convention provides the opportunity to give attention to problems, matters of current interest, and special statewide needs and concerns where there is a sense of urgency.

(6) Annual conventions provide more opportunities to participate in association activities.

(7) There is greater opportunity to see new equipment, books, and supplies.

(8) In South Carolina, where the association went from annual to biennial sessions temporarily, the belief that more people would go to Southeastern Library Association during the off year was discredited. The same number of people went to the Southeastern Library Association Conference when the South Carolina Library Association met biennially as when there were annual sessions.

The list of reasons for annual sessions may be endless, but the issue goes deeper than balancing pros and cons. The more fundamental question is whether North Carolina librarians want a strong, cohesive, vibrant library association with membership from all corners of the profession, or a loose federation of sections going their own way. The latter is what we have now.

The amount of real association business done at conventions for the last three sessions could be typed on two pages. The Executive Board meets more frequently, but spends most of its time appointing committees ad infinitum, listening to reports from these committees, and preparing for the next convention. Most of the North Carolina Library Association committees which are appointed, with the notable exception of the extremely active Intellectual Freedom Committee, make single annual efforts and which in some instances merely

duplicate the work of a section committee.

The sections are active, by comparison. The Public Library Section supports workshops throughout the state, as does the College and University Section. The North Carolina Association of School Librarians practically stages its own off year convention.

Workshops, however, are far from a replacement for a convention. Attendance is limited, and there are usually no exhibits. Moreover, different types of librarians do not associate with one another to any extent more than once every two years. Because of the resulting loss of interest in one another's problems during the biennium, there is little communication at the convention itself.

Issues like intellectual freedom, networking, union lists, copyright, public and private funding sources for libraries, women's rights, bibliographic control of state publications, and management are good examples. Other state associations have addressed these issues squarely with a continuity and solidarity of purpose brought about by an interested membership meeting annually. The North Carolina Library Association, on the other hand, has hardly scratched the surface of these issues.

Opponents of annual sessions may argue that the financial burden to the association might increase with yearly conventions. It is equally possible that increased interest generated by annual sessions will attract more attendance and more exhibits and that the cost to the association will decrease. In either case, there would be no more than two or three dollars difference to the individual member.

The amount of volunteer time required to put on the convention is another argument. There is no reason, however, why the same persons have to be convention managers, local arrangements chairmen, exhibits chairman, and the like year after year. There is sufficient interest within the

association membership to change these appointments each year.

In the final analysis, annual sessions and the proposed constitutional change appearing at the end of this article will not be decided upon by the Executive Board or a few vocal and influential members. It will be the entire membership of North Carolina Library Association who will make the decision and commitment. It will include librarians in the small towns who's budget does not include trips out of state to the Southeastern Library Association Convention, the energetic members who want to discuss current issues annually, and those who want to foster cooperative efforts between libraries in an effort to further goals common to the total library profession.

The chance for change is in the air. It is up to the membership to grasp it.

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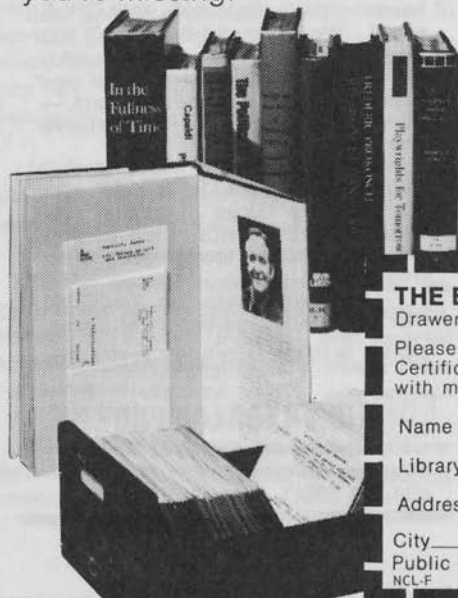
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## CON: Financial Considerations of Annual NCLA Conferences

by Arial Stephens, Director  
Public Library of Charlotte and  
Mecklenburg County

There are several financial aspects to holding annual North Carolina Library Association conferences of which members should be aware. The Treasurer's 1973 Biennial Conference Financial Report is appended for information and study.

If exhibits, as well as meetings, are to be scheduled, space needs for the conference require at least 12,000 square feet for exhibits and an equal amount which can be broken into two large rooms for simultaneous meetings. Hotel and motel accommodations in the state severely limit available locations. When NCLA was smaller, a number of hotels could handle the conference at small cost to the Association and could provide meeting rooms and meal facilities free because we were occupying most of their sleeping rooms. Now, since no single hotel has adequate space, the Association must pay for an exhibit hall, as well as some meeting room space. Hotel ballrooms still come free, but few locations have adequate space for the several large meetings.

Traditionally, revenue from exhibitors' rental payments have exceeded the cost of mounting the exhibits and of space rental and have left a respectable surplus to help the Association operate in the "off-year." Of the recent exhibitors, about one-half of them say they would be obligated to exhibit regardless of the frequency of the conferences. The other half say they would alternate years, thereby cutting the exhibit revenue. If the exhibit budget broke even with annual conferences, the Association would remain solvent. Should annual exhibit costs exceed revenue, the Association would be in financial difficulty

and would be forced to raise membership dues.

Conference registration and ticket sales, which represent approximately 30% of the surplus income, might also be reduced to a deficit figure should there be annual meetings and a possibly consequent smaller attendance.

Another aspect, while not financial, is the amount of volunteer time invested in preparing for the conference. The Treasurer spends much time in mailings, having tickets printed, and pre-registering. The Exhibits Chairman spends about 10 to 20% of his or her time for three to four months prior to conference time with contract forms, mailings, and setting up the exhibit layout. Local arrangements are a full-time job for several people in the host city in the months before the conference. Furthermore, various Association officers must spend hours of time contacting and confirming speakers and programs. Having been deeply involved in mounting the conference for the last fifteen years, I doubt that I, and many others so involved, could afford the time for an annual conference.

Reports from exhibitors consistently state that North Carolina has the best state conference which they attend. Should we risk one excellent biennial conference for annual conferences which would have fewer exhibitors and fewer librarians attending? Can we financially afford annual conferences? Should off-year conferences without exhibits be held, and would they remain that way? Is ALA's mid-winter conference an indication of what an off-year meeting would become?