

The Status and Future Needs of College and University Libraries in North Carolina

by David P. Jensen*
Director of Library Services
Greensboro College

North Carolina is blessed with a number of the South's finest university and college libraries. Despite that fact, the state as a whole has significant library weaknesses among its academic institutions. We do not have enough trained librarians in many schools, almost three-fourths of our libraries have inadequate collections, and pay is low and inequitably distributed.

Among the cornerstones of librarianship — buildings, books (collections), and people (staff) — we are (at the moment) perhaps strongest in buildings. The great higher education boom of the Sixties resulted in numerous new academic library buildings in North Carolina. From 1967 through this year there have been at least twenty-seven major library construction projects at twenty-four schools. It is noteworthy that more than one-half of those projects were completed in the last three years of the Sixties. Although public buildings constitute only one-half of the twenty-seven projects, two-thirds of the construction since 1970 has been at state institutions.

A new twenty million dollar research library is now being planned for the University at Chapel Hill. It will be paid for from the sale of the University's utilities. But the prospects for another twenty-five buildings in the next decade are not bright — especially among the private institutions — unless federal or other similar funds become available.

The prosperity that prevailed in the mid 1960s benefited public and private schools alike, but the recession that struck higher education in the early Seventies (in North Carolina) appears to have been harder on the private sector than on the public. This is a pattern reflected in nearly every aspect of academic libraries — indeed in North Carolina higher education.

According to data reported in the 1976 Higher Education General Information Survey there are 439 full-time professional librarians working in North Carolina's colleges and universities and an additional ninety-eight "other professional staff." Thirteen private and two public colleges employ two or fewer professional librarians. This means one-third of our libraries in

*An address presented at the NCLA Biennial Conference in Winston-Salem on October 6, 1977.

senior institutions do not meet national (Association of College and Research Libraries — ACRL) standards for staff; indeed six reported they employ only one trained librarian. Quantity alone does not ensure quality service. Providing excellent library service requires an enormous amount of energy, dedication, effort, and imagination on the part of librarians in any circumstance, but especially when they are alone or have only one or two professional colleagues to assist them.

Adequate pay could take some of the sting out of working with an overextended staff, but the fact is librarians in smaller institutions generally earn less than their colleagues in larger schools, and inflation has been robbing us all. From 1970 to 1976 expenditures for salaries increased 52% in public institutions, 37% in private senior institutions and 24% at private junior colleges. During that same period the Consumer Price Index rose 54.2 points. None of you need me to tell you that your pay is buying less and less.

There is one other important thing about salaries. The average pay for women is \$2,800 less than the average pay for men in our academic libraries. In one large public institution the difference between the average pay of men and women is \$5,000! Clearly this should be a matter of serious concern to all academic librarians.

Pay in relation to the rest of the nation is generally lower; how much lower is not clear from the available data. The HEGIS information does not lend itself to comparison with the recent ACRL salary survey.

Books, periodicals, documents, microforms, recordings, etc., held by our academic libraries constitute in the aggregate one of North Carolina's greatest resources. There are, however, numerous institutional differences and deficiencies. The ACRL standards for collection cannot be met by thirty-one of our forty-five senior colleges, including one-half of the public institutions.

What is worse, twenty are at the 'C' level or lower which means they have less than 80% of the collection called for in the new standards. So far as I can determine only one library slips below the 'D' level (50% of the standard) which is a considerably better record than one of our neighboring states can claim. But we have no reason to be proud on that account. One goal of this state ought to be to bring every academic library up to ACRL standards.

There has been a major shift of collection emphasis from books to periodicals over the past six years. Book collections in North Carolina have increased 27% since 1970, but the number of periodical subscriptions increased 86% and in the face of prices that have more than doubled during the same period. Considering the pace of the so-called knowledge explosion, we may expect the increasing emphasis on periodical collections to continue. It does not seem unreasonable to expect future budget norms to show expenditures for periodicals equal to or greater than expenditures for books.

The rate of book collection growth appears to have peaked in this state during the 1970-71 fiscal year. In recent years the growth rate has leveled off at about 4.8%. In this respect the state is following a national trend.

Although expenditure for non-print materials in senior academic institutions constitutes less than 2% of our budgets, collections of such materials have increased threefold since 1970. Nevertheless, institutional purposes, teaching methods, traditional organization, faculty and library resistance, and lack of funds continue to restrict the development of non-print collections. It is not likely that we will soon have such extensive A-V collections as do our community college cousins. Printed materials will continue to be the principal items collected at North Carolina's senior

colleges and universities in the foreseeable future.

Automation is assuredly one of the most important changes of the century in libraries, but its widespread use in the large number of small academic libraries in this state is yet several years away. The use of electronic data processing equipment is not likely to be cost beneficial today in a library already so starved for funds that it cannot find \$100,000 a year for its entire operation, ranks at the C level in the ACRL standards for collection, and employs a total staff of only five or six.

These conditions do not prevail in all our colleges and universities. Those institutions which can make efficient use of electronic data processing should do so as rapidly as they can. No library should assume that automation is too costly, but ought to investigate the possibility, weigh the advantages and costs, and make a decision based on local conditions. The decision should be reexamined from time-to-time taking into account the rapid advances now being made, especially in the field of small computers; and the continuing development of a wide variety of bibliographic bases.

A general strengthening of the basic collections at our four-year and two-year colleges is vital to the improvement of academic library service in this state. The long-held and oft-expressed belief that undergraduate colleges can achieve great savings in library expenditures by avoiding duplication of many items and sharing resources is a myth. Many years of personal experience in such a cooperative venture indicates that the essential core of materials needed for support of the curriculum must be held by each institution and that selective, cooperative acquisitions programs simply do not work at the undergraduate level. On the other hand, close cooperation among the state's research libraries to avoid costly and needless duplication of

esoteric and seldom used materials would appear to have merit. The opportunity to develop a network of cooperating libraries is already available for many institutions and ought to be pursued with vigor and originality taking the fullest advantage of modern technology.

There is always a need, and it will increase, to shift our emphasis from collection acquisition to collection *development* giving more care to the selection of individual items and to the planning of the collection's growth. We need to give more attention to methods of access, that is to improve the service to our users by making better use of the available human and material resources.

The future of academic libraries in North Carolina is inextricably tied to the health of the institutions those libraries serve. As the academic recession of this decade becomes a depression in the next, libraries must inevitably share the fate of their parent institutions. We already know there is going to be a major drop in the number of college-age men and women in the mid 1980s — those students have already been born. The decrease in the pool of potential college students may be mitigated somewhat in North Carolina by the fact that we are a state of positive migration — our population is increasing by persons moving into the region. There may also be an increase in the number of older persons attending college. But these factors are not likely to make up entirely for the expected loss of students.

What does this all mean? Fewer students means less institutional income, reduced library budgets and, I believe, the possibility that several of our colleges will close. The challenge to librarians will be to continue providing adequate service in the face of shrinking budgets, smaller staffs, and only slowly growing collections.

We will need to find ways to be more cost effective — to cut the waste and

squeeze everything we can out of each dollar spent. This probably means a further reduction in the relative position of salaries vis a vis the general economy.

Even libraries of state supported institutions, which have, in the current recession, experienced relative peace and security — if not the largess of the late 60s — are likely to find themselves hard pressed to justify their expenditures to the legislature and the public as well as to their own administration.

We must, then, do a better job of:

- (1) justifying our requests for funds,
- (2) spending the funds we do receive, (3) selling our program to our administration and to our institution's public, (4) promot-

ing the use and value of our libraries to faculty and students, and (5) helping each other through networks and other cooperative ventures. In short, we must be prepared for the next decade by planning, promoting and sharing.

It is evident even in this brief review of academic libraries that North Carolina needs additional sources of funds—whether they be private, state, or federal. It is also evident that a careful and thorough assessment of academic libraries in this state such as the one completed in South Carolina last year would assist librarians and educational leaders to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and to plan for appropriate action.



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