

The Beginning of the End or the End of the Beginning

North Carolina Libraries was first published in 1942. The membership of the North Carolina Library Association voted a 33% dues increase to fund the printing of the journal. Longtime members of the Association report that the North Carolina Library Association Foundation was originally established to provide long-term funding for the sustainability of *North Carolina Libraries*. The journal has had a long history of highly successful editors. Frances Bryant Bradburn currently holds the record for serving longest as editor. This editor has worked since the early 1980s under a number of prior editors. I assumed the editorship in 2004, being appointed by the then North Carolina Library Association President Pauletta Bracy. Immediately I began to look for ways to reduce the cost of producing the journal and in fact was able to do this and we continue with a budget that was sixty percent less than earlier ones. One of the major innovations was to use Corrections Enterprises to print *North Carolina Libraries* instead of a commercial print shop. Not only was Corrections Enterprise almost fifty percent cheaper than local print shops, they delivered the finished product to our mailer in Raleigh at no additional cost.

Over the next six years, printing costs increased, but we were still able under our allotted North Carolina Library Association budget to produce print issues that were in full color (except for the inside covers which were black and white). In 2007 membership in the Association peaked at around 2000 members. By 2011 this had declined to the current level of 1040 members some 360 of whom are “new members.” This has led to a considerable strain on the Association finances. In the late 1990s *North Carolina Libraries* experimented with a pdf web version. This was continued until 2007, when we switched to an open journal software system hosted by East Carolina University. For the past four years we have produced both a print and electronic version of the journal. Last year it cost around \$10,000 to produce the two versions. The 2011 North Carolina Library Association proposed budget as presented by the Finance Committee contained a deficit of around \$14,000. At their January meeting the Executive Board of the Association voted to reduce the allocation to *North Carolina Libraries* to \$1,000, thus cutting our budget by 90 percent. This will mean that unless additional funds are found, the 2009 print issue of *North Carolina Libraries* will be the last produced. This will be the end of an era of print for the journal that lasted sixty-seven years. In those years *North Carolina Libraries* won several times the H.W. Wilson award for the best state library journal.

Is this the beginning of the end, or the end of the beginning? I think the latter. Many serial publications are moving to the web using readily available open source software. While it looks like we will have to shift from reading a paper copy of *North Carolina Libraries* before the fire, to reading it on our iPad, we are at least joining what is becoming a 21st Century publishing trend. I hope that you will continue to support *North Carolina Libraries* in the future and continue reading the journal online as we move forward. To those of you who favored a print issue, I am sorry but it really was all about the money. To those who have supported us in the past, please stick with us and support us with your advice, criticism and articles.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor and sent to Joyner Library, East Fifth Street, Greenville, NC 27858, or by electronic mail (scottr@ecu.edu). We reserve the right to edit all submissions. If you are interested in writing for *North Carolina Libraries* or would like consideration for news and product information, please send brief information to the editor at the above address.

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