

# North Carolina Special Libraries— Resources and Services for the General Public

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All of us who are librarians, whether we are affiliated with public, school, special, or academic information centers, can benefit from familiarizing ourselves with the services provided by the special libraries in our region. Many of the special libraries in North Carolina provide information services to the general public and cooperate with other types of libraries. This article will describe special libraries in the state and examine in particular the availability of their services to persons other than their primary clientele. The services of three sample libraries will be described and observations made concerning trends and future developments in the areas of networking, cooperation, and computer applications.

The special library serves primarily a specialist clientele located within a single establishment, all of whom are engaged in working towards one common purpose. The term embraces commercial, government, industrial, medical, scientific, and technical libraries. It includes libraries and information services of research establishments and university departments or institutes, national libraries with specialist functions, and libraries of learned and professional societies and institutions. The special library collection is frequently comprehensive in carefully defined subject areas, and acquisition of material is normally performed on demand. For most special libraries retrospective publications are exceptions rather than rules in what is commonly a smaller facility manned by a smaller staff than other libraries.

The special librarian and staff who seek to fulfill all the informational needs of their primary clientele must adjust their priorities for library functions to best implement the goals of the organization. These people are themselves members of the groups or bodies which they serve and must possess an accurate understanding of the group's interests as well as a special awareness that enables them immediately to react to the changing nature of user requests in anticipation of the future needs of their clientele. Information delivery is almost always required on a "needed-yesterday" basis, and thus the making of a good special library requires the ability consistently to "produce" under pressure.

Continuing growth in the number of special libraries has been a significant characteristic of modern librarianship. Many learned and professional societies have had special libraries since their foundation, and similarly specialized libraries in law and medicine have had a long history. Company libraries, that is, libraries in business and industry, provided the impetus for the special library movement in the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century a

tremendous surge in specialized collection development was a direct response to the expansion of research activity, particularly in science and technology. The industrial library was developed on a comprehensive scale immediately after World War II when government policy supported industrial research by direct grants and contracts. Advance reports and periodicals as well as patents, standard specifications, preprints, trade catalogs and technical handouts formed a substantial part of the stock.

## Categories of Special Libraries in North Carolina

It is obvious from what has been stated above that great numbers of different kinds of institutions and establishments house collections in "special libraries." In examining the special libraries in North Carolina, categorizing these institutions into three groups simplifies analysis and clarifies assessment of purpose and function. The three groups are:

1. Government—facilities funded by the federal, state, or local government;
2. Corporate/Research—facilities funded by a profit-making or non-profit business, organization, enterprise, etc.; and
3. Academic special—facilities funded by universities with which they are affiliated.

Statistics on the number of special libraries in North Carolina and the services they provide have been compiled from two sources. The *Directory of Special Libraries in North Carolina* was published in 1979 and lists 121 public and private special libraries.<sup>1</sup> *Statistics of North Carolina: Special Libraries*, compiled by the Division of State Library and published in 1980, covers data for the period July 1, 1978, through June 30, 1979.<sup>2</sup> It lists 138 special libraries. Four of the libraries included in the *Directory* were not listed in *Statistics*. Thus, the figure of 142 special libraries in the state of North Carolina is used for purposes of this analysis.

Government libraries (federal, state, and local) number twenty-nine, comprising 20 percent of the state's special libraries. Eighty corporate/research libraries account for 56 percent, and thirty-three academic libraries represent the remaining 23 percent.

## Availability to the Public

To assess the availability of the special library, its staff, its collection, and its services to the general public, that is, people or institutions other than those giving funding support, two criteria have been used:

1. Degree of restriction of the public to enter the facility and use its resources in-house and
2. Number of special libraries acting as suppliers of materials requested through interlibrary loan and thus making their collections accessible through institutional exchange and cooperation.

As shown in the table below, fourteen of twenty-nine government libraries, sixty-four of eighty corporate/research libraries, and eight of thirty-three academic libraries have restricted access policies. In this analysis, the term "restricted" is defined as either no public access or limited access to enter the facility and use materials in-house. Those institutions having policy guidelines of limited access note that patrons must be qualified under such conditions as the following: "with management approval," "for research, reference only," "by application," "each request decided individually," etc.

### Public Access to Special Libraries in North Carolina

	Restricted	Nonrestricted	No Response
Government	48%	41%	10%
Corporate/Research	80%	11%	9%
Academic	24%	70%	6%

It appears that of all special libraries in North Carolina, 61 percent (86 of the 142 special libraries) have policies of limited public access or no access. This figure seems high but is, in fact, misleading. By using the base figure of 121 libraries listed in the *Directory* (which gave more detailed information about the degree of restricted access), 79 percent (96 of 121 special libraries) offered either total access or limited access to their collections. Thus, only 21 percent of the institutions in the *Directory* were totally closed to the public. The commonly held belief that special library collections are not usually available directly to the general public appears false under this scrutiny.

As for interlibrary loan cooperation, 53 percent (75 of the 142 special libraries) reported participation either as both suppliers and borrowers of loaned items or solely as suppliers. In fact, 58 percent of all interlibrary loan activity in North Carolina during 1978-79 involved information-oriented special libraries.<sup>3</sup> The medical libraries, supplying 48 percent of all loans provided by the special libraries, were heavily utilized. It should be noted here that four of the twenty-five *Directory*-listed institutions stating themselves to be closed to the public did supply interlibrary loans during 1978-79. Thus public access to circulating portions of special library collections was still possible through institutional cooperation. In sum, only 17 percent of the *Directory*-listed libraries house collections inaccessible to the general public.

A third criteria, the provision of computerized on-line bibliographic searching as a reference tool available to the general public, might also be used to assess the degree to which special libraries serve patrons other than their primary clientele. Forty percent of the special libraries in the state (57 of 142) provide computerized on-line bibliographic searching, and some of them make the service available to patrons other than their primary clientele. Policies vary, however, and unfortunately figures on this subject are not available.

## Interlibrary Loan and On-Line Bibliographic Searching Services

	Interlibrary Loan		On-line Searching	
	Provide	Do Not Provide	Provide	Do Not Provide
Government	55%	45%	48%	52%
Corporate/Research	44%	56%	28%	72%
Academic	73%	27%	63%	37%

### Three Examples

Examination of one sample institution from each of the three previously defined groups provides examples of the kinds of services available from special libraries in the state and leads to several observations concerning trends and future developments in the areas of networking, cooperation, and computer applications.

The Environmental Protection Agency Library Services Office, part of the air pollution research facility located in Research Triangle Park, is used principally by EPA employees and contractors needing technical services and materials related to air pollution, pesticides, and the health effects of pollutants. Exemplifying a governmental special library on the national level, the facility maintains a collection of 8,000 technical reports in hard copy, 200,000 reports in microfiche, 1,000 books and 650 current serial subscriptions. In addition to receiving various abstract and index services and subscribing to looseleaf publications relevant to environmental work, the library houses the largest single air pollution reprint file, *Air Pollution Abstracts*. The reprints can be used in-house or photocopied. The library also functions as a release agent by providing free EPA documents for distribution to the public. While disseminating 6,000 to 10,000 copies of these EPA documents to the public each month, the library fills approximately 3,000 interlibrary loan requests for photocopies of journal articles.

Although the office's primary responsibility is to serve the EPA employee and on-site contractors, other levels of service to different user groups have been established. Computerized literature searches with access to more than 200 data bases are conducted free of charge by library staff for the primary patron, state and local air pollution control agencies, and non-profit environmental groups. Thus, the EPA Library Services Office offers on-line bibliographic searching to a category of the general public one level beyond its primary clientele. However, only EPA employees and on-site contractors can check out materials from the library's collection. Most of the people using the facilities who are not EPA employees are contractors who frequently telephone in their requests. The third level of service is given to other libraries and the public—the circulating collection is available through interlibrary loan.

The EPA Library Services Office is a direct member of the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) cataloging data base network and belongs to the EPA Library System. In fact, all of the systems analysis and programming for the EPA

library network is performed at the EPA library located in the Research Triangle Park. It is here that computer-generated catalogs with hard copy and microfiche output as well as union catalogs and catalogs for individual libraries have been developed.

Although requests for reference services usually are made by the primary clientele, the general public will be provided with any assistance relevant to air pollution information. If a question is related to EPA activities other than air pollution, the patron will be directed to another source within the agency. Staff will always attempt to make an appropriate referral.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Information Center in Chapel Hill is an example of a corporate/research library. The staff of such a library must understand the theoretical and practical needs of its client while recognizing that the increases in technological capabilities during the past ten to fifteen years have affected the decision-making processes of all organizations and radically altered management activities. In an era in which all phases of business are becoming more technical and assuming many of the methods and techniques of scientists, one of the greatest resources available to the businessperson, financial analyst, or management executive is reliable information service.

The Information Center collection contains 3,000 books and 185 current serial titles dealing with the subjects of health economics, management, and health insurance. Although it did not supply any interlibrary loans during 1978-79, the Information Center filled sixty requests by a primary user group of 300 persons during the year. On-line bibliographic searching is not available; copying facilities are located throughout the building. An internal automated cataloging system utilizing records similar to MARC type records is in operation.

The Information Center is organized for the management staff, who are the primary users of the collection. However, serious researchers are welcome to use the materials in-house and to photocopy materials. The Triangle area medical school librarians make referrals when graduate students from hospital administration classes, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health, or departments of economics require the specialized reports and services of the center. Arrangements for on-site visitation privileges or material photoduplication are usually made through the Public Relations Department. While the level of reference service given to the primary patron and to the "special public user" is relatively identical in terms of amount of staff time expended, certain confidential reports are not available to the latter. Although not in the practice of actively advertising the facility's services and recruiting general public patrons, staff members do not hesitate to act as resources of information to the local community or suggest making inquiries of the Information Center, thus becoming a part of informal referral and exchange networks.

The Duke University School of Law Library exemplifies a special library affiliated with an academic institution. The library's primary purpose "is to provide the highest level service to the law school, both by supporting the curriculum, and by supporting the research needs of faculty and students."<sup>4</sup> This support is represented by a staff of 6.75 professional full-time equivalents



and a collection consisting of 229,043 cataloged books and 3,497 current serial titles, as reported in July 1980. In addition, the library holds 185,470 pieces of microfiche, 1,835 reels of microfilm and 37,986 microcards. Operating as a selective government depository, the library receives 8 percent of all available government documents and makes them available to any user.

On-line computerized services offered include the LEXIS data base, two computer terminals used for Computer-Assisted Instruction exercises and a new index to legal periodicals that is published on reels of computer output microform and accessed through a motorized reader. The LEXIS data base may be operated for educational purposes only by Duke law faculty and students as per contract agreement. Thus, the on-line searching service is available only to the primary clientele.

The Duke Law Library has a policy of being responsive to the greater public because of the nature of its specialized collection and its relationship with the larger university community and surrounding geographic area. The legal information needs of the rest of the university, the public, and other libraries are fulfilled through limited access to the collection, interlibrary loan, and national and regional cooperative efforts with other information-oriented institutions. The library collection may be used in-house, free of charge, by the general public. Copying facilities are available for a fee. Tours are provided for students of other university departments and the circulating collection is available to local attorneys and Duke Law School alumni possessing guest cards and to persons with Duke University identification.

The library supplied 1,043 interlibrary loans during 1978-79 and 828 during 1979-80. Duke law faculty and students requested 88 loans during 1978-79 and 170 during 1979-80. The library is a participant in the OCLC computerized cataloging system through the regional SOLINET network and will record its holdings among those of other law libraries in the national on-line LARNET union list project.

Working with representatives of the libraries of Duke University, North Carolina State University, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, staff members of the Law Library are examining future local activities in the areas of interlibrary loan, collection development, microforms, and preservation as part of the Triangle Universities Library Coordinating Committee (TULCC). Plans are also under way to be brought into the on-line Duke University Perkins Library automated acquisitions system as part of collection development cooperation. The librarians actively participate in professional associations and are involved in the exchange of information as representatives of the Law Library.

## **Observations Concerning Cooperation**

The issue of the special librarian's responsibility beyond serving the primary patron to serving the larger audience is of great importance to all librarians today. Just as no special library or information center expects to supply all of its information requirements from its own resources, the cooperative efforts of all the diverse members of the library profession must be nurtured and developed to enable greater use of both individual and corporate resources.

This cooperation minimizes duplication and creates access to a range of material and sources of information which no one organization could economically provide.

At the recent White House Conference on Library and Information Service, special librarians voiced concern that the specialized services they and their parent organizations could offer in the maximum use of information and access to it were unknown. They addressed themselves to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) objective calling for ensuring that "basic minimums of library and information services adequate to meet the needs of all local communities be satisfied."<sup>5</sup> Special librarians realize that this objective is a goal shared by all members of the library profession. This attitude is demonstrated clearly in the previous statistical analyses regarding public access and interlibrary loan cooperation and in the stated policies of the three sample libraries.

It is apparent that the growing costs of acquisitions and storage require that information sources be spread among many institutions. This fact is at the foundation of cooperative library organizations. While such dependence on external resources has been characteristic of libraries for some time, the great proliferation of various cooperative arrangements is a contemporary development.

An example of this networking activity in operation can be seen among specialized biomedical libraries. They stand in the forefront of cooperation, having taken a vital place in the information transfer process. These libraries are part of regionalized networks within this country, coordinated by the National Library of Medicine through groups of Regional Medical Libraries. These in turn are hubs of interstate information exchange and provision programs based in large academic or medical society libraries which work closely with biomedical consortia of all types such as libraries, pharmaceutical houses, teaching institutions, and clinics.<sup>6</sup>

Several factors, however, work against the movement toward special library participation in networking. One is the issue of public funding benefitting the profit-making sector. Others are budget problems and inconsistent IRS rulings that have inhibited some special libraries in the for-profit sector from joining not-for-profit networks. Many states are currently passing legislation calling for multi-type library cooperative development that excludes special libraries. Turning to another NCLIS objective that encourages the "private sector to become active partners in the development of a national program," it appear that a uniform set of policies and regulations which are relevant to future private-sector/government interaction must be promulgated. On the other hand, financial mechanisms, which are currently lacking, must also be developed to reimburse non-tax-supported libraries and information centers for their services.

Finally, another factor working against networking cooperation is the philosophical barrier that the special library would be giving up a long tradition of non-standardization and uniqueness to become a part of a coordinated organized community emphasizing commonalities. Protocols and rules needed to maintain communication links require a bureaucratic administration, and the

leadership necessary to bring about a network is always a conflict with member organizations, who tend to resist the control of network regulations. However, networking advantages in terms of increased and standardized bibliographic control and better service to the patron do and should offset some of those drawbacks.

In summary, special libraries have a long history of service to their parent institutions and primary clientele. What is noteworthy today is the increasing realization that times of limited resources necessitate the cooperation of all members of the information science profession to make all kinds of information available to those who need it. Special librarians sense a professional responsibility to provide information services in varying degrees to the general public. This sense of responsibility is demonstrated in policies of public access to special collections, interlibrary loan, computerized on-line bibliographic searching services, and cooperative efforts. One can look at North Carolina special libraries to see these developments and, by becoming familiar with the resources and services they provide, join with other members of the profession to serve better those in need of information.

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### References

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