

Libraries . . . Spread the News

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

From the President

Remember November 10, 1988, as an important date in NCLA's history. That's the date when two-thirds of the people responsible for library service in this state—the paraprofessionals—organized their own round table within NCLA.

The meeting at the Durham County Public Library featured an energetic presentation by Debbie Wolcott, president of the Virginia Library Association's Paraprofessional Forum, which was established almost ten years ago. Ms. Wolcott emphasized the networking and communications accomplishments of her group.

The most enlightening part of the meeting for me was the information from the small group discussions on what issues North Carolina's paraprofessionals would like to address:

- communications from above; sometimes they get it and sometimes they don't;
- paraprofessionals supervising their co-workers (and friends) when the professionals are gone;
- limited travel funds for paraprofessionals to attend meetings, workshops, etc.; therefore, the need for this group to schedule programs in different parts of the state;
- some kind of credit or recognition for training; certification for paraprofessionals;
- the need to learn the procedures for requesting reclasses, upgrades, etc., to relieve salary discrepancies;
- how to get other kinds of recognition for work well done beyond salary increases;
- assertiveness training and how to gain the respect of the professionals;
- discrepancies in job classification in different institutions, especially within the UNC system;
- job descriptions that don't accurately reflect the work being done;
- temporary upgrades for paraprofessionals taking over responsibilities of vacant professional positions;
- advocacy for paraprofessionals;
- improving work performance through workshops.

As I listened to these reports, I found myself wishing that more professionals, especially more administrative staff, had been at the meeting to hear what this group was saying. Providing a forum for paraprofessionals to present their needs and concerns to other members of the library community is one of my hopes for this new round table. Sometimes we can work alongside people everyday, yet not hear them when they try to tell us what their concerns are. Working alongside them in NCLA will provide a different sort of opportunity for communication, and I am certain that it will be a beneficial one. Beyond that, the North Carolina Library Association as an organization will be richer for the new people and new ideas that this group is bringing into it.

Some of the paraprofessionals will be interested in working toward advanced degrees in library science, and I hope that NCLA will be able to provide them with the support and encouragement to do so. Recruiting from the paraprofessional ranks was one of the ideas suggested at the October executive board meeting when we discussed the problem of declining minority enrollment in library schools. This is one of the crucial issues facing librarianship today, and different members of the executive board had valuable perspectives on the problem. I have appointed a Task Force on Minority Recruitment to consider this issue further and report to the executive board on what they think NCLA could do to address it. Kieth Wright from the UNC-G library school has agreed to chair the committee. Evelyn Daniel from UNC and Ben Speller from NCCU will serve with him, as will Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, chair of NCLA's recruitment committee; Sheila Core, chair of the scholarships committee; and Carol Southerland, chair of the North Carolina Association of School Librarians.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the FBI and their Library Awareness Program. NCLA's own eminent intellectual freedom fighter Gene Lanier from ECU was one of the ALA luminaries who recently met with representatives from the FBI to discuss their interest in librarians and library users. That the FBI and members of the

library community have very different ideas on the value of the FBI's program has been made abundantly clear in the national library press, and I don't think I need to go into all of that in this column. What I do want to emphasize, however, is the point on which the FBI and the library community agree: the importance of libraries. I don't think any federal government agency has ever before given us such respect, even though that respect has manifested itself in a program contrary to much of what we stand for as librarians. One FBI person was quoted as saying that the KGB knows that having a librarian on their side is worth more than a couple of engineers, because librarians have access to "all that information." Surely the library public relations professionals ought to be able to build a campaign around that. "What is one thing that the KGB and the FBI can agree on—when they need really neat information, they go to the library." The public relations people in the crowd could come up with something better, but you get the idea. Think about it: the FBI is onto how useful libraries are—it can't be too big a step from the FBI to the Budget Office.

Patsy J. Hansel, President



**Happy
New Year**

Lighten Up:

A Call for Papers (Great and Small) Illustrating the Humorous Side of the Library Profession

It's said that librarians take themselves and their work too seriously. It's said, in fact, that we have no sense of humor at all.* *North Carolina Libraries* is planning an issue devoted to the fun and whimsical side of our work. If you would like to tackle one of the items listed below (or come up with one of your own), please contact by April 1:

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Spoofs on our research methodology and results (cf the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*)

Letters to the Editor (of *NCL*) with replies and counter-replies

Horrendous manuscripts (puns, misspellings, misstatements of fact &c.)

Rethinking our professional philosophies, theories of cataloging and classification, public service, etc.

From the Public—mangled reference questions, citations; excuses for lost and damaged materials

Biographies of (Fictitious) Librarians

Histories of (Fictitious) Libraries

Floor Plans for New (Fantastic) Library Buildings—submitted by: a cataloger, a reference librarian, a director, & a patron

A Day in the Life... (a librarian for whom everything possible goes wrong)

Epistolary Sequences concerning:
an overdue book; a vendor who continually misbills you for something; a patron protest of a harmless book (e.g., *Cinderella*)

(Fictitious) North Carolina Books and Their Reviews

Proposed New Bylaws for NCLA

*If true, *North Carolina Libraries* will present you with its complimentary official blank book in lieu of an issue.

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