

Passport to Adventure

- The Right to Read

by **THE HONORABLE NICK GALIFIANAKIS**

Member, U. S. House of Representatives

I am honored to be here today with such an astute group of people. You may be assured that as I was preparing my remarks, I was particularly careful to double-check all my references. I am also pleased to share this occasion with people whose profession has been extolled by poets, playwrights, and even composers of musical comedy. Perhaps you are familiar with the Shakespearean character who prized his library above his dukedom. And we all remember with great fondness the "Madam Librarian" of "Music Man" fame, who felt called upon to elevate the minds of her townspeople by persuading them to read the "good" books.

Looking out at this audience today reminds me anew of how completely the members of your profession have spanned the decades to explode the mythical image of the quiet, subdued, introspective librarian who was lost in a maze of dusty volumes. In today's public awareness, you are one of the most "with it" groups of our time . . . sharing with an inquisitive public not only a wealth of wonderful volumes, but a world of maps, globes, films, tapes, information retrieved by computers, and modern micro-media.

One of my favorite friends in Washington is a public school librarian — an interesting and charming person who helps us with research projects from time to time. Not long ago after one hectic work day, she wrote a poem which I suspect captures much of the atmosphere of a school library . . . and I persuaded her to let me share

her verse with you today. It is written completely in quotations, and it goes like this:

"I'm looking for a book I've seen . . .
It's about this big, and green.
I don't recall what it's about,
But I'd like to check it out."
"Do you have a book that's short?
I need it for a book report.
Please help me find one right away . . .
I just found out it's due today!"
"Miss Fassett, Bobby's such a jerk!
He talks so much that I can't work.
Please send him back. You can't send ME . . .
My teacher said to stay 'til three!"
"Our Christmas play is looking worse . . .
can we come in here to rehearse?
Boy, this is going to be a riot!
Oh sure, Miss Fassett, we'll be quiet."
"I have to use this book on weather,
But the pages are all stuck together . . .
It looks a lot like bubble gum,
Now I've got it on my thumb!"
"What's atomic energy?"
"Are there microbes in the sea?"
"How deep is the Pacific Ocean?"
"Will you define perpetual motion?"
"Quick! I need a book on snails."
"How heavy are the biggest whales?"
"Why can't fish breathe out of water?"
"Who was Agamemnon's daughter?"
"Why did the Roman Empire fall?"
"Don't you know anything at all?"

I would imagine that most of you have had experiences similar to the one depicted in that verse, and on behalf of all my fellow Tarheels, I want to thank you for your patience and understanding . . . and for

the very tangible public service you are providing to the people of North Carolina.

I think it is very clear that, throughout history, the library has played a vital role in the American educational process . . . and I might add that your history has been a fascinating one. More than three centuries ago, the general court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony appropriated 400 pounds to establish a college. A couple of years later, when the Reverend John Harvard donated an additional sum of money, and gave over 300 volumes from his library to this new institution, the grateful court named it Harvard College in his honor.

In the following century, the Subscription Library — as it was called — also was viewed as having a clear educational purpose. Benjamin Franklin declared that the Subscription Library had "improved the general conversation of Americans and made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries."

The relationship between the Public Library and education was clearly defined in the 19th century by Melvil Dewey, the Decimal King, when he noted that "The school TEACHES children to read, and the library must supply them with reading which will serve to educate".

Over the past one hundred years, the expansion and achievements of America's Public Libraries can only be described as phenomenal! This has been a personal triumph for members of your profession, for you have overcome the persistent obstacle of insufficient financial and material resources, and substituted your own precious human resources and initiative to make available books, periodicals and a host of other services to millions of eager Americans.

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efforts, our public libraries here in North Carolina are providing our citizens with a passport through time and space — a passport which allows anyone to walk with Socrates in ancient Athens, to travel with Marco Polo in his Journey to the East, to explore with our Astronauts the Wonders of Space . . . to take part in a hundred thousand intriguing adventures of the mind.

As a member of the 92nd Congress, I am pleased to report to you that, this year, we have been successful in obtaining higher funding than last year for the Library Services and Construction Act — which, as you probably know, is the principal federal legislation that provides financial assistance to our Public Libraries. I am much less pleased to acknowledge that over the past three years, the Nixon Administration has consistently tried to slash appropriations for Federal Education and Library Programs. On each of these occasions, the majority of the members of Congress — including myself — have voted for appropriations which were more realistic and more in harmony with the vital needs in this area. This has not been an easy struggle, but our legislative victories clearly express the consensus of Congress that our Education and Library Programs are vital to the general welfare of the nation.

This year, the Administration planned to budget only 18 million dollars for Public Library Services under the Library Services and Construction Act . . . a sum which would have provided exactly nothing for necessary Public Library construction, renovation, alteration or facilities purchase. If the Congress had not objected, it would have meant the lowest Public Library appropriation since 1964. But with the approval of both the House and the Senate, we increased the figure to 49.2 million for services, and 9.5 million for construction, renovation, alteration and facilities.

Now, let's take a look at what this action means to us in North Carolina. In the current fiscal year, North Carolina

has been allotted \$1,087,000 under the new Title 1 compared with a total of \$908,000 under the comparable Titles last year. Under Title 11, Library Construction Programs, our state should receive \$204,000 in fiscal 1972, as compared with \$151,000 for fiscal 1971. And finally for programs of Inter-Library Cooperation under Title 111, North Carolina is allotted \$52,000 this year compared with \$44,000 last year.

There is much crucial work to be done with these funds, and I am proud of my own role, and the role of the Congress in securing them for your purposes . . . and we can do better.

Since I became a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I have become even more acutely aware of the importance of the proper priority in government spending. There is only so much money in the Federal Budget, and it is largely incumbent upon my Committee to decide where it must be spent most wisely, and in the interest of the most people. As I have said many times before, the essential question is not *will* the money be spent, but *where* will the money be spent? There are those who have branded me a "Big Spender" because I helped to override the president's veto of the bill which contained library funds.

But, let me say this: I cannot and will not, in good conscience, support the expenditure of billions of taxpayers' dollars for a luxury SST airliner, or to bail out the creditors of flagging railroads or poorly-run giant industries, when there are 18.5 million Americans who lack the reading ability for practical survival in the United States! This is a very real question of priorities. I would take the same action again . . . and I believe my judgement would be supported by the people of North Carolina.

The passport I spoke of a few moments ago — the passport you are providing into the intriguing adventures of the mind — has

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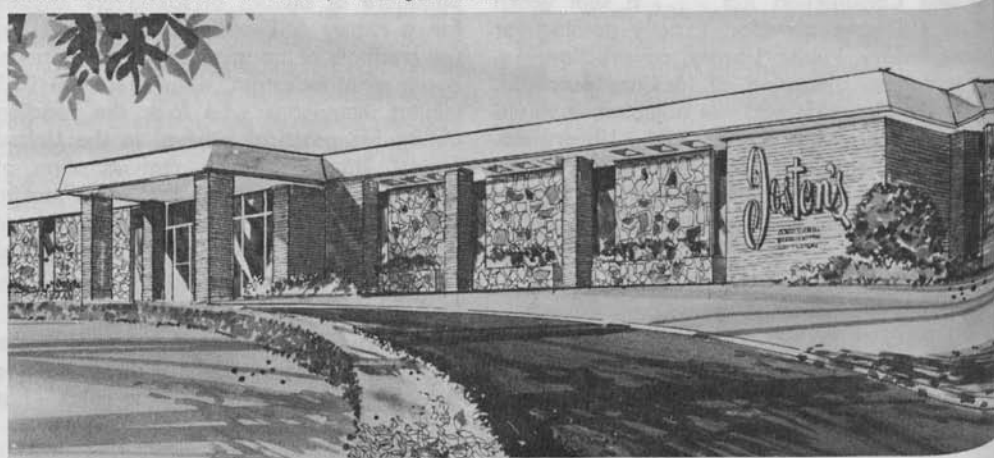
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Bo Horton (above left) is General Manager of Josten's Monarch Book Company in Atlanta. With over 25 years in book wholesaling he can solve many of your acquisition problems. Call him collect any time (404-691-7200). He's nice to talk to. Howard Thompson (right) head of Monarch Lease Plan also has over 25 years of library experience.

Tony Vernon (left below) is General Manager of Josten's American Library Line, a company he founded in Atlanta in 1957. Tony produces the quality jackets, pockets and book cards for our Atlanta book processing center. Ken Boyd (right) is Marketing Director. He received his MLS from Drexel and worked in acquisitions and as an assistant librarian.



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been denied to millions of our people because of their lack of ability to read and to understand the thoughts which flow from well-prepared reading materials.

We recognize that reading is the key factor in the individual's ability to fulfill his own potential and to compete for a meaningful place in today's complex world. The age in which we live is increasingly marked by accelerating change and the necessity to accurately evaluate new conditions and situations. An uninformed people cannot possibly hope to respond effectively to these new challenges . . . but an alert and educated people need have no fear of change and challenge.

Our Libraries must play a vital role as depositories of our collective human legacy, and as significant contributors to stamping out the remaining vestiges of illiteracy and reading failure in our nation.

Dr. James Allen, the late Commissioner of Education, left us another great challenge when he said in 1969, "We must set for ourselves the goal of assuring that by the end of this decade . . . no one shall leave our schools without the skill and desire necessary to read to the full limits of his capacity." In 1970, a Right To Read Office was established in the Office of Education, with the prime responsibility to pull together the energies of over sixty Office of Education Programs. Its purpose was to launch a concentrated attack on reading failure and underachievement. Just last month, the Office announced that ten of

the nation's most promising reading programs had been identified, and are being offered to educators in an effort to encourage their adoption across the country. I think this is very heartening news.

I believe the potential contributions that the nation's Public Libraries can make to the "Right to Read" program are numerous. In the areas of publicity, cooperative lending arrangements with teachers and parents, providing facilities and materials to groups who are willing to tutor children and adults, library orientation sessions for young and old readers . . . and countless other areas, you can help to make this statewide and nationwide effort a resounding success. The Right to Read can become a new way to reclaim American history as we approach our 200th anniversary in 1976.

The American Public Library — the North Carolina Public Library — has a proud history of accomplishment in the past, as custodian of the diary of the human race, and has an exciting challenge in the future.

We are deeply grateful to you for the contributions you are making toward the enlightenment and general welfare of our people. As one who truly honors the great tradition you have established and perpetuated, I give you my assurance that you will continue to have my admiration, and my support.

Thank you again for inviting me to share this special occasion with you today.

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